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**LIVE SEX
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TURNS 50

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AN INTERVIEW
WITH THE LEGEND

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AND RAPPER
LIL XAN

UNDERSTANDING
**THE
ORGASM
GAP**

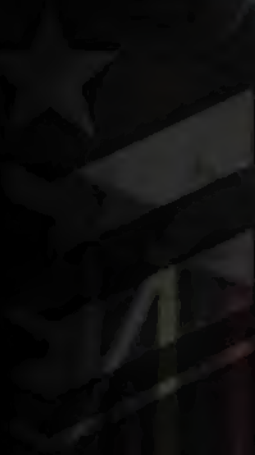
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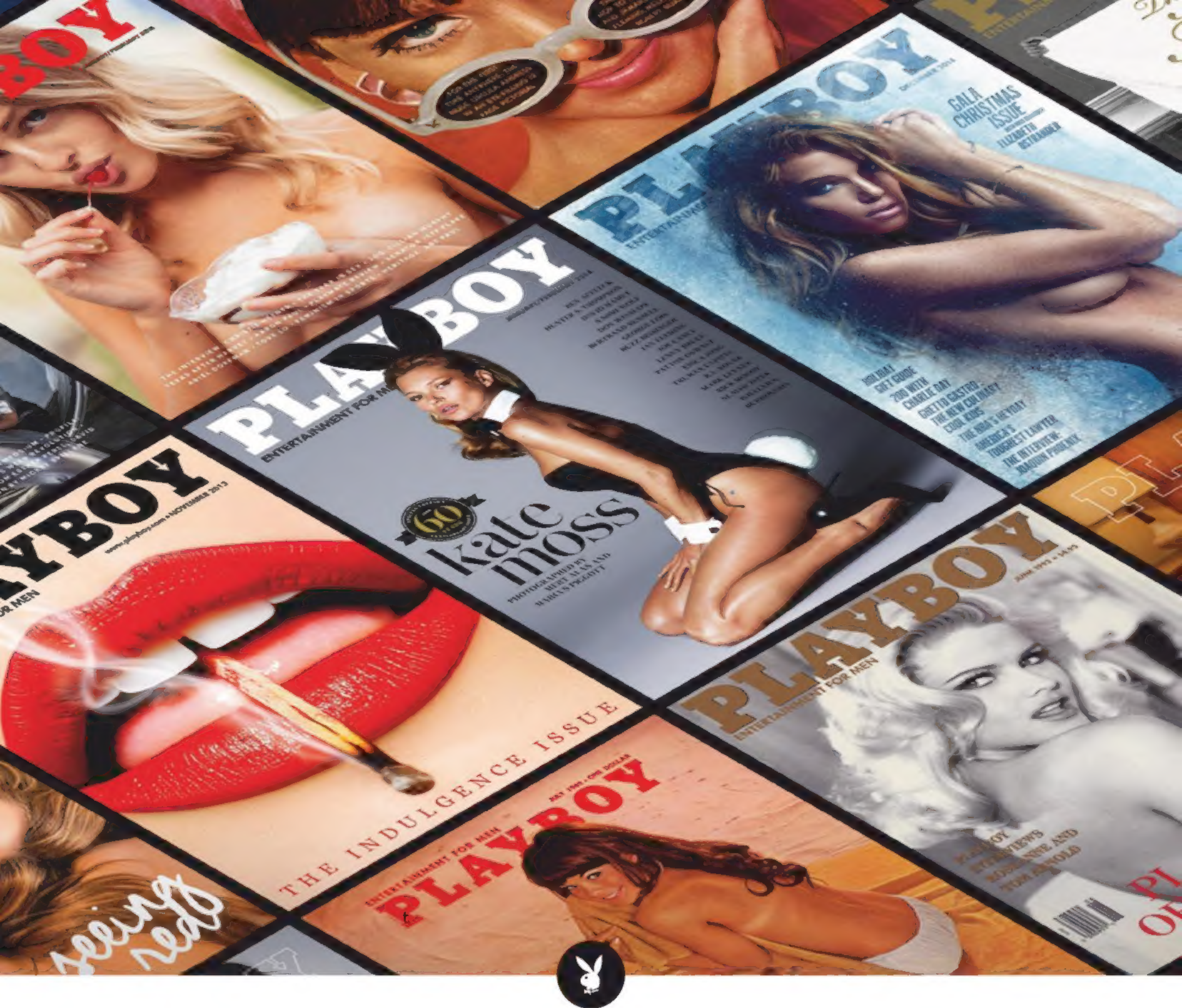




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ON THE COVER *Mattie Spears, photography by Bruce Colero*

No 13 January 2019



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Taste the **MAGICAL** **MUSHROOMS** *that cost ten thousand* *dollars per Pound*

This story could start in a lot of places — the mountains of Bhutan, in Prague or Vienna or Venice Beach, but ultimately, all roads lead to my kitchen, where I've just used the lukewarm remainder of my morning coffee to wash down \$11 worth of rare Himalayan mushrooms. It's 10 am on a Wednesday, and I'm not sure what's about to happen, but I hope something does. These mushrooms won't get me high in a psychedelic sense, but instead carry the vague but promising notions of increased vitality, immunity and mental and physical stamina.

BY **KATIE BAIN**

At least these are the potential benefits listed on my little glass jar of Cordyceps+. Inside are 30 clear gel capsules, each containing an assemblage of eight herbs and the marquee component — cordyceps. Together these ingredients blend into a dull brown the color of wet sand. Each capsule contains 58.33mg — or .00012 pounds — of the cordyceps mushroom, a full pound of which retails for a cool \$10,000, making it the most expensive mushrooms in the world, more on par with gold than truffles. My little jar sells for \$168 and lasts between 10-15 days, making it — beyond the Gucci pumps handed down to me by a friend's mom — the only luxury product in my possession, and certainly the only one inside my body.

"Somebody asked me at the beginning, what do you want to do?" says Joel Einhorn the

founder of HANAH, the Venice, California-based company that makes Cordyceps+. "I was like, 'I want to create the Chanel of herbal medicine.'" It's a sexy notion, particularly in a natural health and wellness industry crowded by tinctures, lotions, vitamins, crystals and Gwyneth's Paltrow's infamous yoni egg, which led company GOOP to be sued after it instructed women to put chunks of jade up their vaginas. With varying regulations and products making claims often untested by the FDA, supplements are a \$37 billion dollar a year wild west industry that's exploded with the mainstreaming of holistic and nature-based wellness.

But even to those who are obsessed with achieving optimal health, cordyceps has an almost mythical reputation. This has something to do with its commensurately mythical

origin. The mushroom grows exclusively on the Tibetan Plateau — a thousand mile stretch surrounded by the world's highest mountains and populated primarily by yaks — that runs from Western China to Nepal. Here, the cordyceps sinensis fungus feeds on caterpillar larvae of the ghost moth. First, the caterpillar buries itself a few inches in the soil, then the fungus enters it, and in time, kills and consumes it. It's a process not unlike several of my romantic relationships. Cordyceps grow from the mummified remains of this caterpillar — imagine a regular caterpillar, but dead and with a narwhal-like mushroom horn growing from its head. This horn is the cash crop plucked from the ground during the three to six week cordyceps harvest that happens each spring, after the snowmelt.

Einhorn encountered cordyceps roughly



15 years after it first made headlines, when a brain injury led him to the Kingdom of Bhutan, a country of 800,000 that's famous for measuring its gross national happiness. Einhorn was born in Chicago and made his way to Vienna as a study abroad student. He fell in love with the stately Austrian city, getting a job in business there during the late '90s tech boom. This position brought him to Prague where he made a fortune in the post-Velvet Revolution Czech capital, but hated sitting around in an office all day to get it.

In hopeful aim for contentment, Einhorn started his own investment fund, made even more money for himself and his partners. With paycheck after paycheck, he opened a Czech nightclub called The Roxy, took up DJing, competed in triathlons, launched a clothing line, opened a travel agency servicing the Czech film industry and served as Tom Cruise's stand-in in *Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol*. He was making six figures, snowboarding a lot and existing in a circuit of low-level Czech celebrities. Life was good, but still, Einhorn felt he had a greater purpose than impersonating to be Tom Cruise.

Then he fell off his bike. His head hit the ground, and when he came to, his collarbone was sticking out of his back. "If I hadn't been wearing a helmet, Einhorn says, "I'd either be dead or eating through a straw for the rest of my life." When he was released from a Prague hospital after the accident, he was depressed and constantly dizzy. But a chance meeting with Ayurvedic master Dr. V.A. Venugopal thrust him into the world of Ayurvedic medicine, and even after this holistic regimen helped him heal from the accident, Einhorn was keen to keep taking the supplements that had fixed his brain and delivered him to a new level of mental clarity and physical stamina.

The problem was that high-quality, low cost herbal supplements were almost impossible to get. Most companies grow them in bulk rather than harvesting them from their natural environments, thus compromising their effectiveness. It's a practice even more common now as the industry has grown, and one Einhorn calls a massive swindle. "Imagine if you took Pinot Noir grapes and planted them in Arizona," he says. "You're going to get

grapes; you're going to get wine, but it's going to have nothing to do with actual Pinot Noir."

So his passion brought him to India to get the best herbs, then developed HANAH in Prague and, through an exceptionally well-connected friend, linked Jigyel Ugyen Wangchuk, the crown prince of Bhutan. (Wangchuck's brother, King Jigme Namgyel Wangchuck shifted Bhutan's ruling system to a parliamentary democracy in 2008, although the royal family remains beloved.) The Bhutanese royal invited Einhorn to the Kingdom, situated on the eastern edge of the Himalayas, as the royal family wanted to open the borders to some commerce. They thought Einhorn, with his interest in high-quality herbs and supplements, would be a good merchant for their country's most sought after product—cordyceps.

It was shortly thereafter that Einhorn found himself high on six-day trek on the Tibetan Plateau, where he watched harvesters pluck

Cordyceps grow from the mummified remains of this caterpillar—imagine a regular caterpillar, but dead and with a narwhal-like mushroom horn growing from its head.

mummified caterpillars from the freshly thawed earth. The mushroom is, for people in the area, a cash crop of gold rush proportions. In 2008, The Los Angeles Times profiled a Tibetan nomad making \$1,000 a week, a massive sum in the country, by harvesting the mushroom. Einhorn's heard of harvesters walking through the Bhutanese capital of Thimphu with the equivalent of a million dollars cash in bags strapped to their yak. Some of these harvesters bring their crop to town, buy supplies for the year and helicopter back to their village.

"As Bhutan becomes more of a destination and a really cool place on the planet, not only for tourists but for herbal remedies and other exports," Einhorn says, contrasting Bhutan with the Amazon where many Indigenous populations have been plundered by the pharmaceutical industry. "[The people in charge] in Bhutan want to make sure locals get a piece of the pie."

Indeed, the demand for cordyceps is significant. The mushroom is considered a status symbol throughout Asia and is becoming increasingly popular among athletes, CEOs and the Silicon Valley crowd always looking for

that competitive edge as they march humanity kicking and screaming into the future. The jars in each batch of Cordyceps+ is individually numbered and when the batch is gone, the product is legitimately unavailable until the next shipment arrives to Venice—the biohacking, juice cleansing, microdosing bleeding edge of the wellness frontier—from Bhutan. HANAH's last batch sold out in days. And while you can walk into any Whole Foods or Erewhon and find myriad cordyceps products, Einhorn says most of these mushrooms are lab grown and less likely to offer the full benefits of the cordyceps obtained 7,700 miles away on the Plateau.

He's also quick to point out that HANAH, in collaboration with the strict Bhutanese government, is conscious of sustainability. While harvesters in China report diminished availability of the mushroom due to over harvesting and the destruction of the Plateau ecosystem, Bhutan where citizens are required to wear traditional

robes while in public and tourists must spend a certain amount of money during their stay in order to enter the country—has strict regulations about the harvesting window, even sending guards to regulate harvests so as not to destroy the fragile ecosystems in which the mushrooms are found. It altogether seems like a legitimately life affirming transcontinental partnership carried out on the mummified backs of valuable insects

As for me, in the 14 days it takes me to consume my cordyceps, I feel fairly life affirmed. I wake up feeling rested and am increasingly compelled to try to inhale the pheromones of any semi-attractive man within a 20-foot radius. I get a cold but rebound quickly. My digestion improves and I feel calm, despite the general state of things. Most significantly, I'm focused. I've never taken Adderall, but this must be what Adderall feels like. When I sit down to work, instead of texting or looking at Instagram, I actually work. I get things done within a reasonable enough timeframe that at the end of the workday I'm not feeling anxious about the next one. By day four, I've deleted Twitter, Facebook and Instagram from my phone and find that in their absence, my brain feels better, like someone has poured coolant on it. And when my little jar runs out I'm like Cinderella when her carriage turns back into a pumpkin—my digestion goes sluggish, I'm less keen to smell the general male population and I reinstall all my social apps.

Ultimately, Cordyceps showed me what life is like with an energy and focus that's hard to achieve on my own. It'd be great to feel so good again, if I could afford the luxury.



In Celebration of Amsterdam's Live Sex Show

Casa Rosso, the oldest live sex theater in the Amsterdam, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

by LILY HEISE



Not all of the lights in Amsterdam's Red Light District are red. Midway down the Oudezijds Achterburgwal canal is one of the quarter's most eye catching facades, emblazoned with a giant pink neon elephant who's sporting a tie with Amsterdam's triple X coat of arms and cheekily blowing a little red heart out of his trunk. The iconic symbol advertises the location of the Casa Rosso, the oldest live sex theater in the Amsterdam, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year

The sex trade in De Wallen, the official Dutch name of the district, dates as far back as the 13th century. Sex work itself was legalized in The Netherlands in 1811, much to the pleasure of the

After some foreplay, the couple flowed through various sexual positions, the revolving platform giving the audience an optimal vantage point.

then occupying Napoleonic troops who spent a great deal of their leisure time visiting the parlors lining the narrow alleyways leading off the canals. Not much had changed in the area until 1968, a year of rebellion and revolutions, including the sexual revolution. This also came with the proliferation of pornographic films and erotic cinemas. However, instead of opening a movie house, the founder of the Casa Rosso, Maurits de Vries, took another approach.

"Our product is unique, we were the first in the world to have a live sex show performed in a theater venue," Jan Otten, the Casa Rosso's current owner, tells me as we sit in the empty pre-show theater. Otten started working at the Casa Rosso as a doorman 43 years ago and gradually climbed the ranks to become the manager before buying the business in 1997.

"At the time it opened, there were only the girls in the window in the Red Light District," describes Otten. "In the original bar there were girls doing striptease. This was allowed, live sex was not. But since [de Vries] owned the whole building, he got around this by converting the third floor into a small theater. When the show was about to start, they closed the door making it a private venue, therefore the bar rules did not apply." It's hard to conjure up that clandestine space from within today's incarnation of the Casa Rosso. Redecorated in 2016, the classy venue now has new red velvet theater seats, a stage with a raisable revolving platform and high-tech illuminated glass poles and a group of seductively frolicking nude sculptures overhead.

Over these 50 years the Casa Rosso has indeed evolved greatly, hand in hand with playing a crucial role in the development of the Red Light District and the rise of Amsterdam as the erotic capital of the world. The Otten Group now includes the well-known Bananen Bar, the Hospital Bar, the Erotic Museum and Casa Rosso brand shops. "The show has something for everyone," Owner Jan Otten goes on. "We try to have a variety of artists, from different backgrounds and ages as well as strip shows, live sex shows, women with men or women with women." The nightly show starts at 7 pm and

goes to 2 am during the week at 3 am on weekends and features a changing roster of 10 different acts that last for around six minutes and are repeated six times a night.

While Otten refers to the live sex acts as "normal sex like you do at home," the shows are performed by artists—not hookers—and by real couples. The theater's manager, Chris, who has worked at the Casa Rosso for 25 years, is in charge of recruiting the artists, which number around 30. Chris explains that "candidates can apply through the website with an email and pictures" or apply in person during their annual auditions in Ibiza. "The couples have to audition in between the acts during the evening show. We choose them based on how they are on stage, if they can forget the audience and do their show. It might be harder for men, so we give them three weeks to get used to performing, then their show must be perfect.

"Most of the couples have worked in the industry in one form or another, whether at other shows or in films," he continues. "They like to work at the Casa Rosso because they don't have to travel around and they have a stable schedule." That said, some do not completely fit this mould. Udy and Erika, the only Dutch couple currently working at the Casa Rosso, were spotted by the theater via a modelling agency and have been working there for sixteen years. As a singer, Udy was used to being on stage, but shy Erika had never performed before. "Remember the first time you had sex?" she asks. "It was like that the first day here." She's still timid, but this is well hidden by the intensity of their sensual interactions. "We love working together and are still very much in love," sums up Udy.

Many of the striptease artists come from Spain, like Maria, who was working in Ibiza as a performer when a friend alerted her to the auditions the Casa Rosso was holding there. She couldn't make them, so she daringly called Chris to convince him into giving her a try. He accepted and what she thought would be six months has turned into six years. "I prepared a special act just for Casa Rosso," says Maria. "After seeing their many amazing acts, I thought what could I do that was different? I came up with an idea that no one had ever done before and everyone loved it. When I do my show, seeing people clapping, smiling, reacting to it, it makes me so happy. I feel like I'm doing something worthwhile."

Sitting in the front row that evening, I was eager to find out what made Maria's act, and the Casa Rosso, so unique. Curtains drawn, the music began and out came the first couple: a well-built tattoo-laden, 30-something man and his equally attractive, lingerie-clad female partner. After some foreplay, the couple flowed through various sexual positions, the revolving platform giving the audience an optimal vantage point. The live sex acts are interspersed with individual striptease acts ranging from a dominatrix-esque vixen to the doll-like Maria who playful removes her frilly underwear and oh so innocently reveals a surprise from her vagina.

"The show is not just for men," adds Maria. "I think women should also enjoy it, maybe even more!" Looking around the theater, I did see more men than women, nonetheless, there was a sizable percentage of couples, and of all ages and nationalities. I was expecting to see more bachelor parties, although, while this is a popular stop for them in the district, the theater keeps their numbers and behavior in check. In fact, one of the most noticeable changes to the theater over time has been its audience. "Before we had many Japanese people," says Otten. "Now we are seeing more Chinese."

"For the Chinese, Amsterdam is the City of Freedom," says Li Jie, head of the Casa Rosso's Chinese department. "The Red Light District is real life and a real area. They are so interested in seeing the girls in the windows. Striptease isn't all that foreign to them since many have already traveled to Thailand where there is a similar atmosphere. A live sex theater is something new. At first they might feel a little uneasy being in a theater, but after a few minutes, they get into it. After the show, they say they feel hot!"

Despite these improvements and expanded audience, it hasn't always been *la vie en rose* for the cheerful pink elephant of the Red Light District. In December 1983, tragedy struck the theater when a recently dismissed cleaner set fire to the building, killing 13 and seriously wounding 16. The theater rose from the ashes, reopening five months later next

Amsterdam needs the Red Light District, the Red Light District needs the Casa Rosso.

door. "Amsterdam needs the Red Light District, the Red Light District needs the Casa Rosso," says Otten. In addition to people it helps draw to the area, Casa Rosso keep it a safe and attractive place. It employs 12 security guards, in addition to the staff at their venues, to monitor and keep the peace in the district. It has also carried out street cleaning initiatives and Otten personally keeps the swans of the canal well fed. Besides its community involvement, the theater helps its mostly foreign staff as a springboard to their dreams.

"Our artists generally work here for a couple of years," says Otten. "Then they move back home and can use the money to do something there."

"This job helped me so much," declares Maria. "It's paid for my Master's and helped me start up my own cosmetics company."

"We are like family," is the common sentiment echoed by Jan, Maria and Erika. It's not your average family, but one with strong bonds.

So what about the Casa Rosso's next 50 years? "What can you do different?" ponders Otten. "Sex will be the same in the future, even with robots."

Still, Chris feels that the new decor has added another dimension to the theater. Its spruced up look, along with frequently changing costumes and music, keep the show alive. Even though the revolving platform of its stage may one day feature robots, as Otten suggests, the Casa Rosso is bound to remain a titillating experience.

WE CAN'T ONLY BLAME MEN FOR THE ORGASM GAP

BY BRIDGET PHETASY

In all these years, we've yet to figure out how we can help women orgasm as often as men. A national study from 2010 found 85 percent of men had climaxed the last time they had sex compared to just 64 percent of women. The 21 percent discrepancy represents the still-sizeable-orgasm gap.

Most articles, [books and websites](#) sexperts blame men for this gap, labeling the entire gender lazy and selfish in the bedroom. Women, however, are postured as helpless victims of the patriarchy. This position drives me crazy, and such rhetoric is anything but productive. No matter what men do or don't do, they seem to land on the losing side every time. They are supposed to care about a woman's orgasms, but are told not care too much. They're supposed to want to please a

woman, but not get any pleasure from it. The "rules" read one contradiction after the next.

When I'm having an orgasm, I care about me, myself and I. And when I'm making a man climax, I feel like a powerful goddess. For me, my partner's pleasure is as arousing as his desire to please me. Great sex is give and take. It's a dance of power and submission, giving and receiving, masculinity and femininity, power and vulnerability. I have never faked an orgasm in my life. I've never felt pressured to orgasm because I would never degrade the sanctity of coming for the sake of massaging a man's ego. That being said, many women do fake orgasms. Three in 10 have faked an orgasm in a long-term relationship. When I've asked girlfriends why they do it, they simply say they don't want him to feel bad.









JOCELYN ***BINDER***

Photography by **CALEB CHIC @CALEBCHIC**
Stylist **EVA DANIELLE @LOVEEVADANIELLE**
Model **@JOCELYNBINDER**







**Describe yourself in three words**

Can I use phrases? Free-spirited, optimistic, and on-the-move. I don't like to sit still or be bummed out.

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?

Of course I was! I am a bit of an exhibitionist and love to express my femoninity and sensuality in the form of creating images. Its such an artistic collaboration for me, using my body to vreate shapes and tell a story with the visions of the team on set.

What was it like starting out as a model?

Starting out was tough, I heard a lot of "no"s from agencies and photographers but I stuck with it and made connections to get the experience I neded for my work to elevate to the level it needed to be to overcome my height, or lack their of...

What would you consider to be your biggest challenge as a model so far?

Definitely being under 5'9 or 5'10 is the hardest part. And I think that's because its somethig one has no control over. I don't mind putting in the hours and practicing my poses and such, but being rejected for something I cant change is frustrating.

Describe your perfect day off when you are not modelling?

Perfect day off...laying by a warm pool in the sun, drinking Arnold Palmers with soft music playing

Do you feel more like a city person or a country person?

I am 100% a city person. Because I am very soclai and I love trying new things. New experiences and foods really excite me on a regular basis. However, I have certainly enjoyed vacations to the country to recharge and be surrounded by nature, on occasion.

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?

I really love living in the US...sometimes I miss Miam. But of the places I have traveled, I could see myself enjoying living for sometime in Hong Kong. Its like the melting pot of Asia, with a lot of diversity...sort of like Los Angeles is here! I also LOVE Bali and could see myself happy in a villa in Seminyak quite easily.

Do you have a secret talent?

Not sure if it's a secret, but I do love to sing. When I was a teenager I sang with my chorus in Carnegie Hall. Now I mostly sing in the car and the shower. I find it to be very cathartic!

A guilty pleasure?

French fries. I cant resist them.

Which song is absolutely certain to make you cry whenever you hear it?

Hmmmm, I think it would have to be "Butterfly Kisses" by Bob Carlisle. My dad introduced me to it and it has been our song ever since. Its about a sweet girl growing up into a woman.

What is your favourite word in any language and what does it mean?

Good question. I really think French is a beautiful language and I love when words have a silly meaning in English. Like pool in French is "piscine" (pronuced pee-seen), so my French teacher used to tell us to remember it by thinking, "Don't piss in the piscine"...lol

Any last words you would like to share with the readers?

I just want to thank you for the opportunity to express myself in this magazine. Playboy is such an iconic brand and I am honored to be a part of it. I got to wear the red bunny outfit recently at the PMOY (Playmate of the Year) party and I have never felt so sexy. Thank you <3







ACE COMBAT 7

SKIES UNKNOWN

ACE COMBAT 7: SKIES UN- KNOWN

Take to the skies this new year
with these exciting new games.

By Andre Coetzer



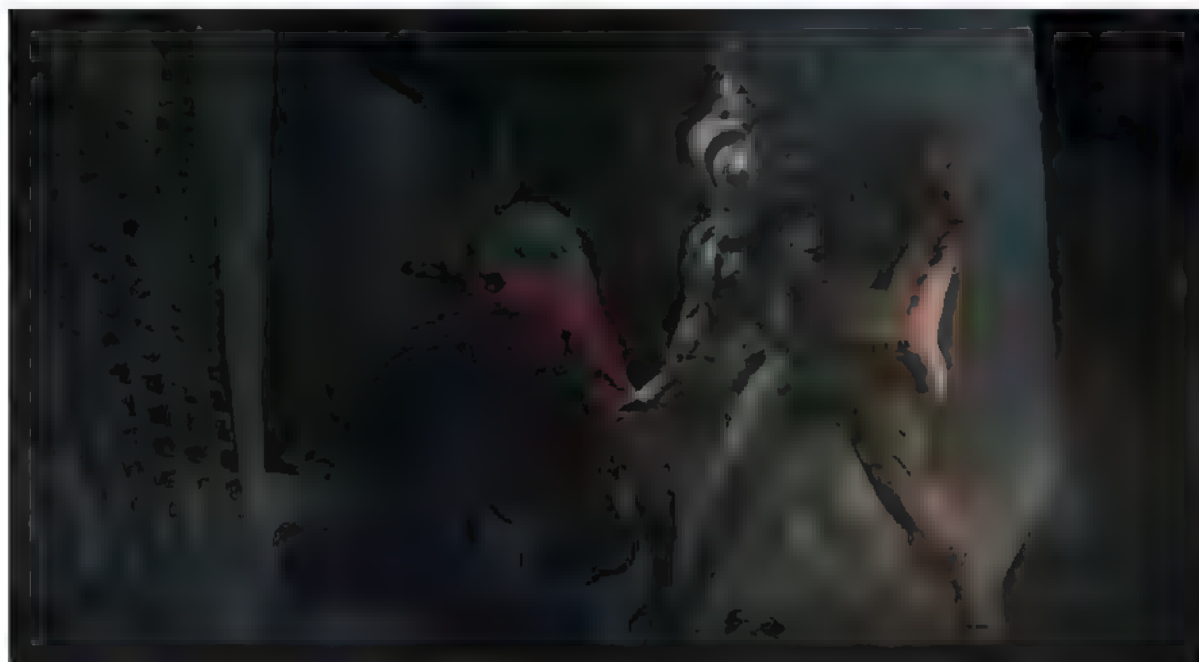
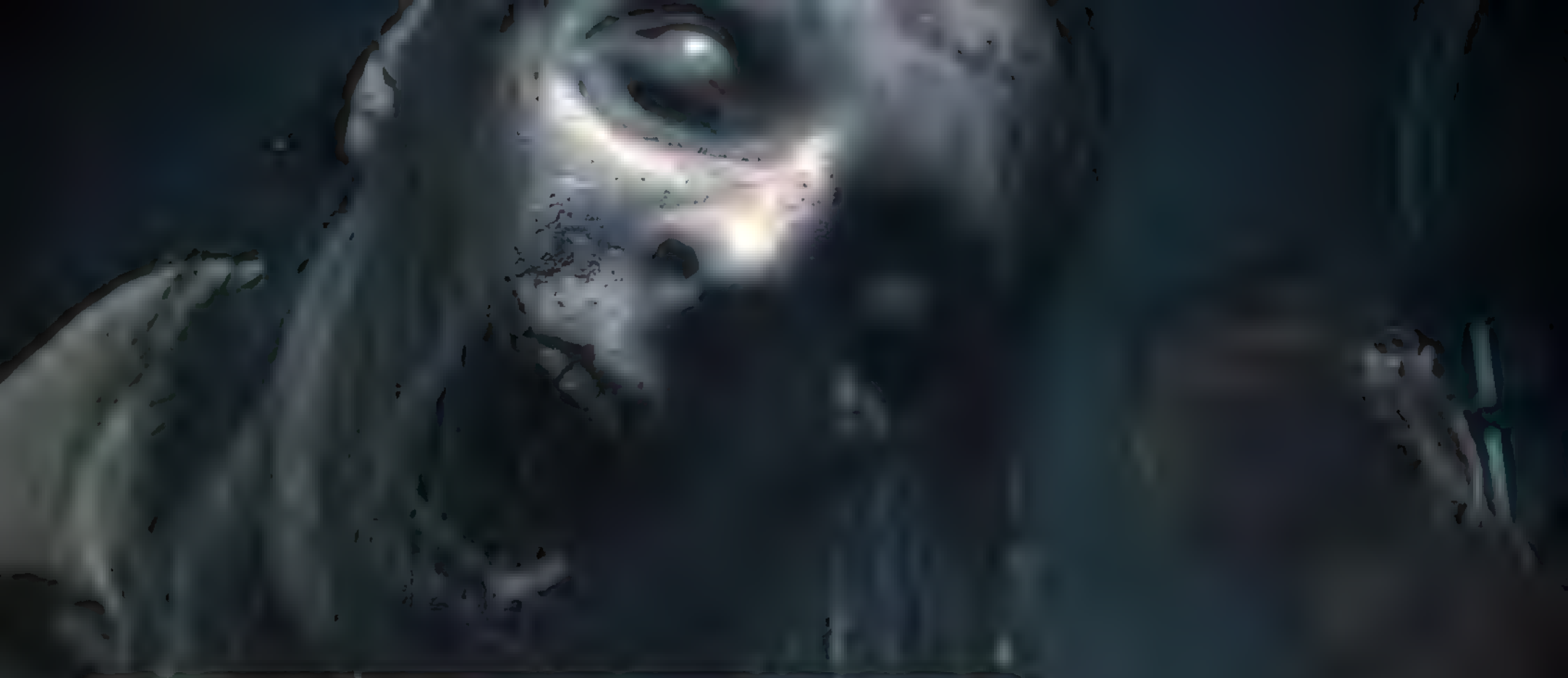


In 1995 Air Combat was released on the original PlayStation. It combined realistic graphics with arcade-style aerial dogfights never before seen on a console, it was a game changer for all plane fanatics. Fast forward to 2019 and the seventh iteration of the Combat series makes it a highly anticipated current-gen debut and it's without a doubt the best in the series. Placing you in the cockpit of the most advanced warplanes, Ace Combat 7 delivers white-knuckle dogfighting action with incredible graphics, all wrapped around a surprisingly good storyline.

With a brand-new graphics engine, the beautifully rendered cloud-filled skies and incredibly detailed cityscapes have never looked better and the level of detail creates a sense of realism never seen before in the series. The combat itself is flying perfection, with just enough realistic handling to give you the sense of flying one of the world's most advanced warplanes, blended with fast-paced arcade action to keep the blood pumping.

Taking down a rival plane over a city landscape has never felt or looked this good. Plus, if you own a PlayStation VR set you get to experience all the action in first person, an incredible experience sitting inside a cockpit, speeding through the clouds hunting down your prey. Namco Bandai has once again delivered one of the best aerial combat experiences on console and a must buy if Top Gun is in your top 10 movie list.





RESIDENT EVIL 2

In recent years, console gamers have seen their fair share of remakes, from the inspiring *Shadow of the Colossus* to the embarrassing *Night Trap Anniversary Edition* nobody wanted. It's been a mixed bag at best and when Capcom announced that they would be releasing a remake of the classic 1998 *Resident Evil 2*, many were sceptical. Yet when the first images started to appear in 2018, people changed their tune from scepticism to unparalleled excitement. The reason for the change was obvious, *Resident Evil 2* 2019 is absolutely amazing.

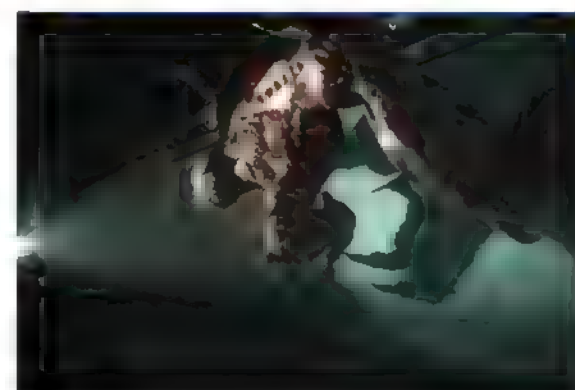
Everything has been recreated from scratch, from the characters to the environments to the story, Capcom

took the 1998 gaming masterpiece and updated it to 2019 standards. The action centres around rookie cop Leon Kennedy and college student Claire Redfield who arrives in Raccoon City, only to find the city in ruin due to a mysterious viral outbreak.

The pair are about to face the true horrors of the Umbrella Corporation as they unveil the mystery surrounding the deadly zombie outbreak. Much like *Resident Evil 7*, this remake looks amazing and the ruined streets of Raccoon City has never looked better. With revised modern controls and a reworked story, playing *Resi 2* feels refreshingly new yet pleasantly familiar, and series regulars will find the redesigned locations a thrill to explore. Capcom clearly meant business when they decided to remake one of the most beloved games ever made and they did not disappoint.

If you're a newcomer to the series or a

Resident Evil mainstay, this new remake has everything to be crowned a modern classic.





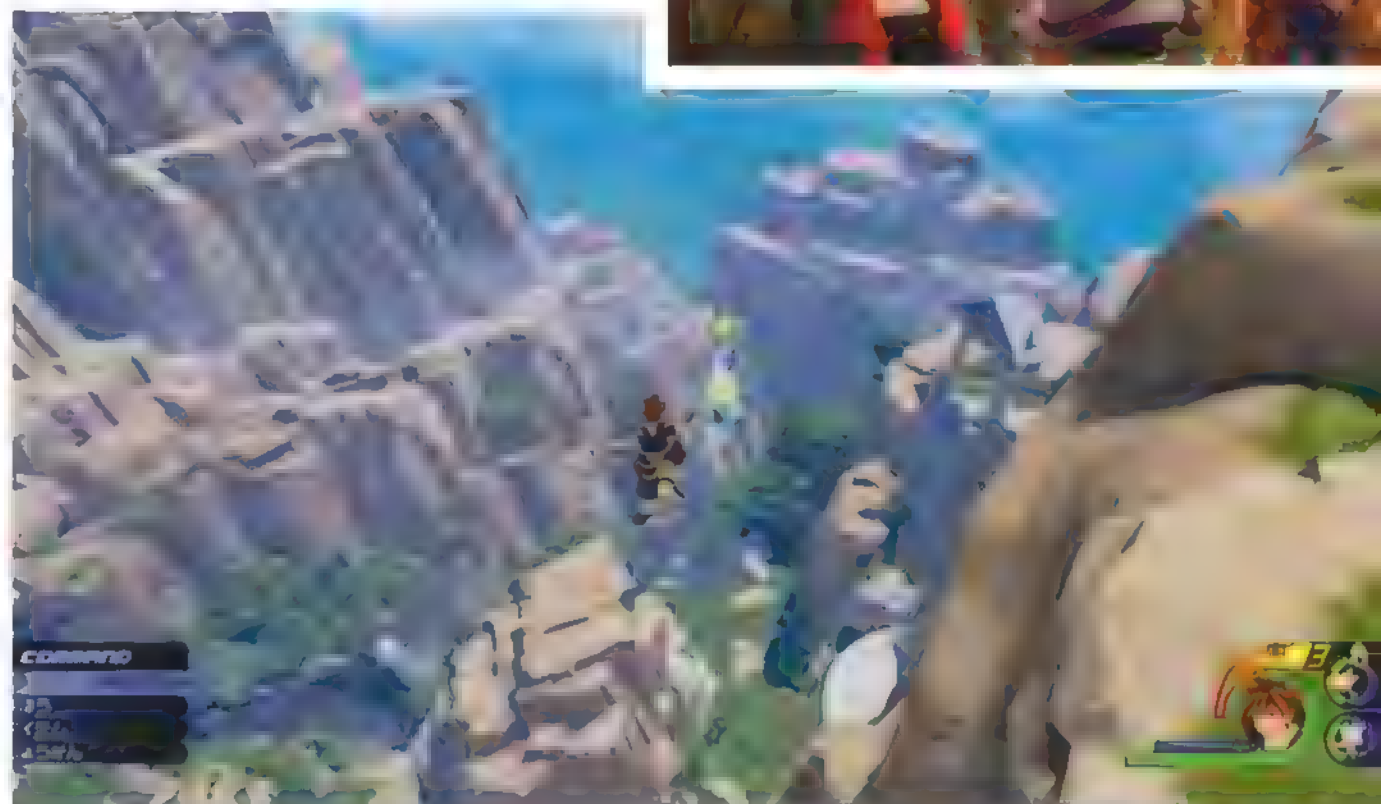
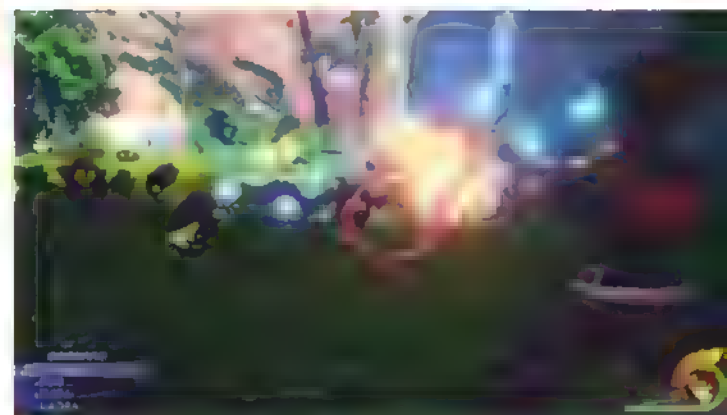
KINGDOM HEARTS III

One of the most highly rated game series of all time finally gets its third official sequel and it's everything fans had hoped for. Thirteen years after the critical second iteration was released, Kingdom Hearts III has finally arrived. For people not familiar with the Kingdom Hearts series, it's what happens when Final Fantasy meets the world of Disney.

It's a bizarre mashup of melodramatic Japanese role-playing games set within the colourful world of the greatest Disney movies. It's weird, it's confusing and it's utterly brilliant. Kingdom Hearts III tells the story of friendship as Sora, Donald Duck and Goofy embark on a perilous adventure through epic Pixar and Disney locations, from Tangled's Kingdom of Corona to Andy's Room from Toy Story, every location will tug at your nostalgia heartstrings as you team up with the most iconic Disney and Pixar characters.

You control Sora who is armed with a powerful Keyblade, the only weapon strong enough to push back the evil force known as the Heartless, who has invaded the Disney/Pixar universe. Graphically this is the best Kingdom Hearts has ever looked, with each location matching its

movie counterpart to a tee. If you're a fan of the Pixar and Disney films then this is a must play and don't be fooled by the cutesy graphics, Kingdom Hearts III is a fantastic game in its own right and arguably the best in the series.





BEHIND THE

WHEEL OF THE

SUPERCAR OF

ALL SUPERCARS





There are those who pray at the altar of Bonneville. Believers devoted to the holy salt. They've been baptized by the alkaline air; the sanctified speeds and their convictions shall not be shaken. One isn't expected to alter one's faith after experiencing the holy flats. There is, however, an older, wilder, less orthodox temple of speed. A sanctuary for relics long forgotten and clerics who have long broken from the path of sodium chloride. A rectory for those bathed in the more ancient and divine dust: El Mirage.

Speed records are still held every year, but like many of the world's more ancient religions, it isn't as practiced as it once was, nor does it carry as much weight compared to its Bonneville-clergymen. Yet, El Mirage's arid lake bed, miles of hard-packed ground and arrow-straight lines make it an ideal choice to chase personal records and sneer at that holier-than-thou congregation of salt ideologues. El Mirage is an outlaw's chapel of velocity.

I've gone fast. I've been privileged to drive numerous supercars and a handful of hypercars. There have, allegedly, been a few flirts with nearly 200 mph speeds. None, however, have succeeded in breaking into the 200-mph club. I aimed to change that. Even if there are a plethora of capable machines, it had to be the right car. Something lacking electrification or hybridization. Not one of massive aero and a clinician's take on punching through the sound barrier, but one of brute strength, brute abilities and the necessity of sizable anatomy to wrestle into compliance. A cleric that respected the old ways and paid homage to this temple of speed. Enter the McLaren 720S, a 710-horsepower priest worthy of the lake and my pilgrimage. Hallelujah.

My journey to the holy land swept through winding mountain roads that saw me trounce apexes, fly past recently renewed coniferous groves once decimated by

Angeleno wildfires. I crossed a desiccated river and blazed across the desert landscape of scrub-brush, cacti, mating tarantulas and long-forgotten husks of automobiles. Past the desert floor's scenery, the vistas opened to the wildly beautiful isolation that borders Edwards Airforce Base.

Cascading through the sublime Bowers & Wilkins stereo came the eclectic compositions by Janelle Monae, Muse, Bob Dylan, Alice Russel, Every Time I Die and Mos Def. McLaren's 720S enraptured my psyche and bolstered my faith as the supercar ate miles with such voracity, it may well qualify as glutinous. Yet, sinner or saint, though my destination and single-minded crusade would have you believe otherwise, the 720S is one that hunts not just for straight-line blitzkriegs, but for blind corners, curbing, sweeping left-handers and sinuous tarmac veins.

The McLaren seems to defy what a road car is capable of as I have no comparable experience. I've driven Bugattis, classic race cars, nearly every modern supercar and most of the best motorcycles money can buy. The McLaren trounces everything. The steering response is lightning. The chassis communicates as if for your entire life, all you heard was a foreign language and someone finally came along and spoke to you in your native tongue. The 720S offers grip far past what you believe possible. Turns I've driven hundreds of times previously were rapidly handled at double-digit speeds over what I thought possible.

Encapsulated in the Mac's greenhouse, the world surrounds you in its high-def glory. Glass is everywhere. The side windows are large. The windshield feels like a truly astonishing feat of engineering as its view envelopes both driver and passenger. And then there are the two portholes above your head. The sun's warming light pierces the leather-lined cabin and chases away the brisk desert air. In here, wrapped in the carbon-backed

seats, the interior's magnificent composition of negative space takes center stage. All this air, this cavernous cockpit, gives the driver the sort of view only seconded by wing-suited daredevils flying through Europe's granite cliffs. On the road, in the canyons and in the boring normalcy of everyday life, McLaren's 720S is nigh untouchable.

Then again, I hadn't yet reached the promised land. I hadn't yet put the hammer down, held on for dear life and screamed until I pierced the sound barrier. I hadn't achieved my goal. Could I find the proverbial holy sea of dust and baptize both myself and the car in its divinity? Would it all come together?

As with all pilgrimages, a tribute must be made. In more ancient days, I'd likely have to sacrifice a calf, a lamb or someone's child. Thankfully, El Mirage's hallowed ground only requires \$15 and a verbal agreement not to drift or do donuts in the middle of the de-restricted lakebed—it isn't hard to understand that doing so would be hazardous to your existence due to the possibility of another apostle careening into you at warp-like speeds. Approaching where the pavement ends and the packed lakebed begins, I toggle the McLaren's nose-lift system, raising the carbon bodywork clear of the drop and onto the sacred dirt and sand. It had rained two weeks previously and the beginning of the lakebed wasn't perfectly pristine. I swerved through the upheaved surface and dodged the lake bed's undulations until it leveled and the scenery ahead became devoid of diversity. I had reached my Mecca.

As I gradually throttled the McLaren's twin-turbocharged V8, I could feel the lake bed's surface changes affecting the supercar's grip. The sticky tires that adhered so ferociously to the tarmac were less useful on the bare earth.

Though I saw few pilgrims on my way in, I wanted to ensure my run wouldn't be impeded, or lest I impede someone else's. As

“ALL THIS AIR, THIS CAVERNOUS COCKPIT, GIVES THE DRIVER THE SORT OF VIEW ONLY SECONDED BY WING-SUITED DAREDEVILS FLYING THROUGH EUROPE'S GRANITE CLIFFS.”



I survey the line I'll take for my speed run, I keep the McLaren's V8 singing at 110 mph. Endlessly smooth, an orange tint strikes the usually bleached surface as the smoke from a series of fires in Malibu hues the sun's rays. El Mirage measures 6.2 miles in length. Of that, what was usable on that day may have measured 4 miles. However, having been here before, the way to maximize speed is to start by arcing around the far end's perimeter and hitting the main straight as far above 100 mph as you can. I can feel the adrenaline begin to course through my nervous system as I reach the far end.

My reconnaissance completed, I put the McLaren's engine mapping into all-out war and blink one more time. My prayer, "Let's go, exalted one." I enter the arc clipping 123 mph. As I gently straighten the steering wheel, I ease into the accelerator — can't go full ham here, it's still dirt after all — and the digital speedometer climbs to 150 mph without hesitation. I can feel the sweat beading across my forehead. A second later, I hit 164. Here, you can really start to feel the mighty McLaren's aero pushing the 720S into the hard-packed dirt. Everything, including myself, feels like it's being compressed into the surface of the lake bed. 177. The engine is eating the earth as well as both gas and air. 184. My eyes haven't blinked. 198. For all that is holy, I'm moving fast. 199 comes and stays for what seems like minutes, but likely takes just all of a handful of nanoseconds. Then, the world goes quiet. The omnipresent air rushing over the 720S in apocalyptic fashion is spirited away. A transcendental moment. Mine and the McLaren's baptism. I



dare not blink as the dashboard flashes from 199 to 200 mph. I did it.

I gently lift off the once-buried accelerator and ease the McLaren to a less preposterous velocity. Rhapsodies fill my mind. Sweet mother of mayhem, I did it. The 720S did it. The McLaren and I did it! What a car. What an experience. What a temple of speed. McLaren's 720S is what happens when you let drivers and engineers run a performance company. A \$300,000 celestial weapon. There are other wild and powerful supercars, machines from Porsche, Ferrari, Lamborghini, Aston Martin, Ford and Chevrolet. But none seem capable of holding a candle to the 720S. Hand on heart, of all the

special kinetic sculptures I've driven over the last five years, the McLaren 720S is the best. A perfect machine.

Later, having reigned in my adrenaline as I streak across the flat desert tarmac, sun sinking behind the San Gabriel mountains, I'm left in total awe by finally being consecrated by El Mirage's dust. And though I have to now endure the laborious hell of traffic back to my homeland, I feel fulfilled, at peace, as if everything is right with the world. El Mirage is a spiritual place. The combination of man, machine and sacred house of speed is one I doubt I'll ever experience again. And to make it into the 200-mph club, I'm left fulfilled.

Praise be the McLaren 720S!.





SKIP HOME FOR AN EXTRA KINKY GETAWAY

BY SEAN ARENAS



It's that time of year. Mom calls to know when you're flying in to town. Everyone is going to be here, she says: grandma, grandpa, the cousins, your two brothers, your kid sister. You're quick to assure her that you'll book a flight immediately—but that's when the dread sets in. You can already hear your siblings' bickering or your mom's well-intentioned nagging. You can already feel the emotional fatigue from having to make nice with everyone.

There's a titillating alternative, however, to rushing home for the holidays. For the sexually experienced and those looking to dip their toes (among other things) in BDSM, there's KinkBNB, described by co-founder Darren McKeeman as "a sex-positive space sharing community." Since 2015, the subscription-based service, headquartered in San Francisco, has grown to roughly 500 hosts in over 50 countries, giving users the ability to plan a sexy staycation by renting dungeons and playspaces from kink enthusiasts.

The site boasts seemingly endless options for a range of budgets, locations, and desires. For example, in Orange County, California, a listing claims to be "SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA'S FINEST BDSM DUNGEON AND MEDICAL FETISH CLINIC," while in Comox, British Columbia, you can rent a "PRIVATE ROOM WITH PRIVATE YARD & HOT TUB." The

its launch, the service has inspired countless conversations, which is the first step towards destigmatization. "Communication is the cornerstone of sex positivity," continues McKeeman. "Without communication there can be no consent, and that's really what we are about. I would love for BDSM and consent culture to go mainstream because I believe it has the power to eliminate rape from our society."

But KinkBNB also serves a practical purpose. "There is a real problem in urban areas like San Francisco—the population density is such that there is little chance for people to have privacy for an hour or two or a whole night," says McKeeman. As a solution, KinkBNB provides subscribers with a network of rentable spaces so that the adventurous can safely and privately expand their sexual horizons. Especially during the holidays, when homes are practically bursting with family members, the occasional pleasure-filled staycation is needed. Because let's be honest: nothing kills the mood more than hearing your kid brother play Call of Duty: Black Ops 4 down the hall. Additionally, the prohibitive cost of equipment makes KinkBNB a viable option for those looking to make their fantasies a reality without draining their bank account at the same time.

With any sexual exploration, it's easy to become intimidated or overwhelmed. Thankfully, beginners are encouraged to become subscribers as the service is not exclusively geared towards

on our site to communicate about what they are looking for with the person they are contacting," says McKeeman. As an added incentive, hosts and providers use the site for free, which encourages people to make their playspaces available.

Unlike other peer-to-peer-based rental services, KinkBNB is community-driven. When renting, subscribers first explain their expectations and interests to potential hosts or service providers before any money is exchanged. This open line of communication establishes trust and fosters a community. "We encourage communication on KinkBNB above all else," says McKeeman. "There is an extremely tightknit kink community. We have tried to be a responsible part of it by supporting our local community. A lot of our local community supports us by being members."

But support must be earned and KinkBNB has made a concerted effort to warrant the trust of subscribers and hosts. "We continue to improve our system to ensure safety and communication for all our users. We do not expose any identifying information for any user," assures McKeeman. Just as hosts are curated and verified, users are rated. "Based on how many services they register with us—including valid credit card information, address, and official ID—we give each user a trust metric, so our hosts can be assured that the traveler is on the level."

KinkBNB also offers additional resources to further advance the sexual journeys of members. "We have a services section where people can

BY LITERALLY PROVIDING SPACE FOR SEXUAL EXPLORATION, KINKBNB DISPELS THE MYTH THAT KINK, FETISHES, AND BDSM ARE SOMEHOW PERVERTED, UNHEALTHY, OR UNCOMMON.

former is listed for \$750 a night while the latter is \$175. But KinkBNB has nobler ambitions than to be merely a kinky version of Airbnb (although McKeeman admits they "started out as an Airbnb clone").

"In the United States, there is a stigma attached to sex education or alternative sexual lifestyles that makes it hard to explore sometimes," says McKeeman. By literally providing space for sexual exploration, KinkBNB dispels the myth that kink, fetishes, and BDSM are somehow perverted, unhealthy, or uncommon. Since

kink veterans. "The person we are aimed at is the 'newbie.' People who are already familiar with the kink community know where the best dungeon is in town, but they will often use KinkBNB if they are looking for a private getaway," says McKeeman.

For the cautious, these "private getaways" are vetted. Given the fact that sexual exploration is inherently vulnerable, not just anyone can make their space available. "We curate our services and locations, so you don't get skeezy guys cluttering up our site with 'chicks stay free' offers. We reject a lot of listings. The key is that we want everyone

connect with therapists, coaches, educators, and guides in the local community as well as dominatrixes and boudoir photographers," says McKeeman. "We want to make these services safely available to all the members of our site, whether they are a traveler or a host or a service provider."

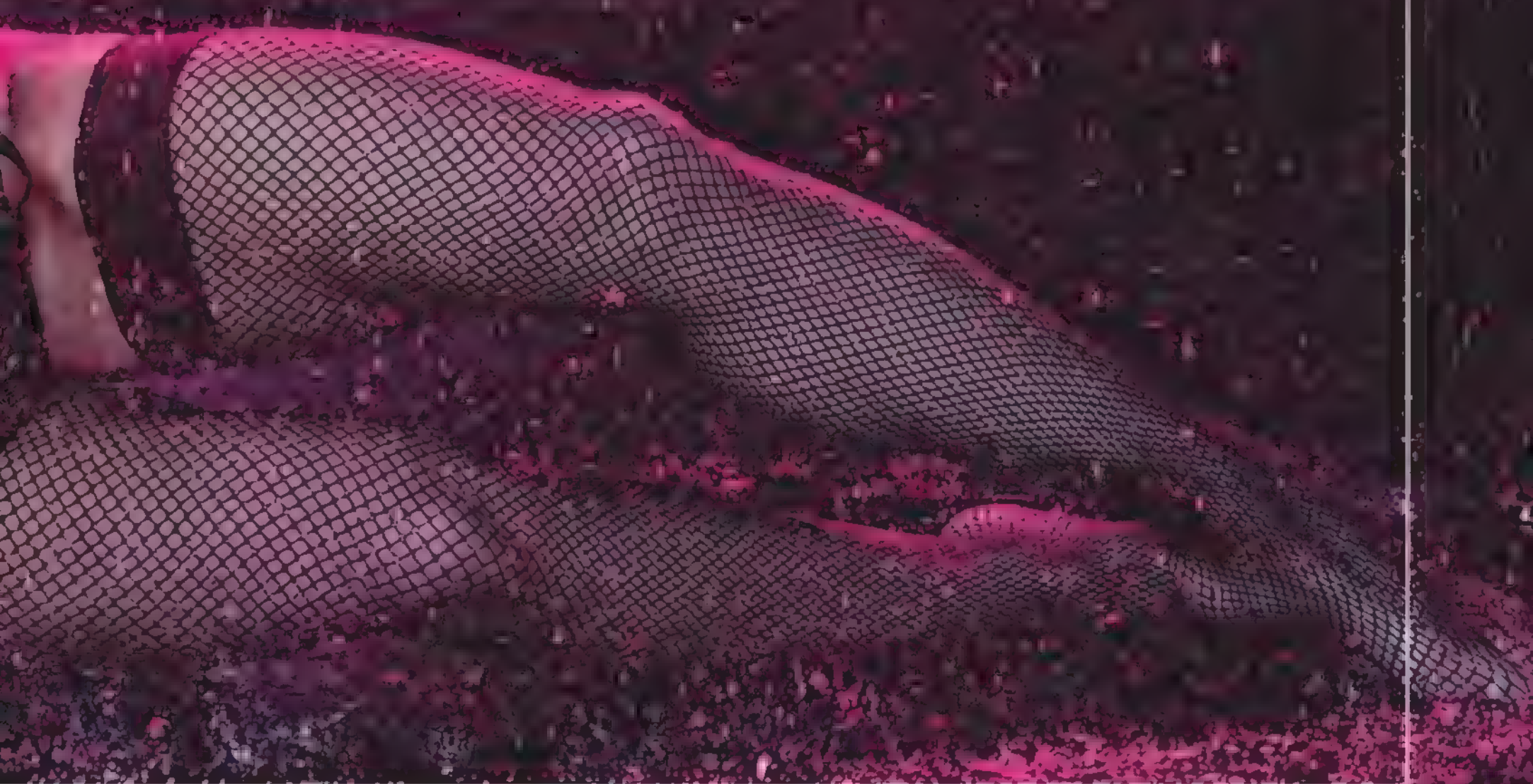
Whether you're traveling or home for the holidays, if the season has got you down, consider getting it on at a KinkBNB. With its focus on communication, community and consent, the sex-positive service just might be the dungeon away from home you've been looking for.





CINDY SUZUKI

Photography by **GIO RHIVERS @GIORHIVERS**
MUA **BRIDGET MARTINEZ** Model **@CINDYSUZUKI**









Tell us something surprising about you!

I was born in Chiba, Japan.

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?

Of course! This has always been one of my dreams and I am so honored to have gotten the opportunity!

What inspires you?

I inspire myself because it's amazing how much you are able to push yourself to the limit and grow.

Why did you choose to pursue a career in modelling?

Being bullied from a young age, I began modelling in order to lift up and empower other women to live life confidently and to learn self love. Something that I struggled to do myself.

Who do you look up to in the modelling industry?

Too Many to name! I am inspired by all of the beautiful, powerful women I see daily. Women who are not afraid to be themselves and express their true beauty through art.

What are some of your hobbies?

I enjoy hiking, fitness, and dancing.

Name three things on your bucket list?

Travel the world, buy a home for my parents and open up a non-profit animal rescue organization.

Turn-ons

Ambition, kindness, humility

Turn-offs

Arrogance

Describe to us your perfect date

Puppy play date at the dog park and ice creams to end the night

Which world capital would you most like to visit, and why?

I have always been infatuated by Cairo, Egypt.

What is your mantra?

Encourage yourself, believe in yourself, and love yourself today. Never doubt who you are.









NICK CANNON

WILL TALK ABOUT ANYTHING

It's about five minutes into my interview with Nick Cannon. The star is slouched and relaxed on the couch next to me in a room backstage at Atlanta's Center Stage Theater—wearing the trademark Wild 'N Out black and red that are emblazoned on the show's logo and also decorate the green room—when he mentions, “We’ll talk about anything. There’s nothing that’s off-limits.” He’s referring to how the comedians on the now-12th season of the MTV improv show refuse to shy from any area of discussion. (This proves true just an hour later as I watch from the VIP bleachers as cast members hilariously tear each other apart during a sketch called “Eat That Ass Up.”)

But as soon as he says this, my mind immediately goes to the conversation I’d had earlier that day as his publicist went about politely preparing me for our interview before quickly punctuating our polite chat with a quick “No questions on Mariah.” Then my mind went to yet another moment, a little bit after that, when one of the castmates was going off about how if someone wanted to quit the show, they should just go ahead and do it. I’d been sitting backstage for a while at that point, somewhere down the sprawling back halls of Atlanta’s

Center Stage Theater, where they had been taping the upcoming 2019 season of the MTV show for the past two weeks. Someone in the room locked eyes with me cautiously, then asked if I was already recording. Unfortunately, I wasn’t.

Despite the barriers put on Cannon’s candor by his handlers, he seems to lean toward rebellion. One of his most recent displays of defiance was his response to Kanye West on Instagram after West called him out for making comments about Kim Kardashian, who is married to West and used to date Cannon. Cannon countered by posting from his own account, “You’re not gonna tell me what I can’t and can say. I’m a solid individual—if someone asks me a question, I’m gonna answer it to the best of my ability.”

There were more than a few people—squad members, entourage, assistants, etc.—hanging out backstage when I walked in. They were trying to find Cannon, who was apparently in wardrobe or getting his hair done, or both. When he finally wandered in, my first impression was that he looked muscular. Up until that moment, the image I had locked away of Cannon was that of a scrawny Nickelodeon prodigy, not a buff media mogul.

“I’ve always been an open book like that, so I feel like I’ll always continue to be like that,” Cannon tells Playboy, affirming his comment with a few quick nods. At this point, I’m dying to mention his ex, the same way your hands seem to gravitate towards things surrounded by big bold letters that read “Do not touch!” I take a short breath. I push the button: “Speaking of being an open book,” I begin before bringing up what has to be my favorite bit of Mariah Carey and Nick Cannon folklore—the infamous self-congratulatory sex playlist.

Cannon once revealed that Carey’s favorite mating music happens to be her own, spilling “Can you imagine having sex with Mariah Carey while Mariah Carey is playing in the background? That is a dream come true.” He then added that their sensual soundtrack of choice was Carey’s smash hit “Hero.” I mention the playlist to Cannon, and ask if his sexual sonics have changed now that he’s single. What’s he playing, after having finalized their divorce in 2016? “Me!” he jests confidently. “It’s [my album] Calling All Models. No, it’s a little bit of everything. I always used to joke about that in the past, and now I really don’t even have time to throw on music. I’m ready to get to it. Like, let’s go. Put on the playlist later!”

BY ERICA HAWKINS

COURTESY BY NICK CANNON







Cannon's latest music project, *Calling All Models*, was released in June, and it's important to note that the album art shows a shirtless Cannon holding a phone while he's casually groped by multiple female hands that happen to be ornamented with very long, manicured nails. "I could have never put out a project like *Calling All Models* when I was a married man. It was really one of those things where I touch on every aspect of my life—pre-marriage, marriage, afterward. It goes into that space of who am I currently, who I've been. Who I want to be. And you can't really have that full self-exploration until you go through some stuff. Until you can look at the other side of the lake and say, 'Man, I just swam all the way over here.'"

The actor, comedian, TV chairman of for Nickelodeon's *TeenNick* and (every now and then) musician, has been dipping further into the business end of the music industry. He recently founded *Ncredible*, a record label, artist development and production company run through Republic Records. It's given Cannon the opportunity to mentor up-and-coming artists, much like he says he's done Pete Davidson. Cannon and Davidson have known each other for a decade, even before Davidson appeared on *Wild N' Out* in 2013,



Now I really don't even have time to throw on music [before sex]. I'm ready to get to it. Like, let's go. Put on the playlist later!

and long before his *SNL* fame. Cannon shares that when Davidson decided to pop the world's biggest question to the world's biggest pop star, one Ariana Grande, he called Cannon before he got down on one knee.

Selfishly, as someone who was obsessed with Grande and Davidson's whirlwind three-month courtship that culminated in their engagement before coming to an end last month, I had to ask Cannon what he thought of the couple. "I'm a fearless romantic," Cannon says earnestly with a smile. "I think love is something that should be whimsical—love is not something that should be boxed in or dictated by how one should do it. If somebody feels like they're so passionately in love, and they've only known

each other for a few days, that's a beautiful thing. It's a fairy tale, and that's a beautiful thing—someone wants to fall in love with someone from a completely different walk of life, whether it's race, creed, religion. That's what Shakespeare is built off of—those are the romantic aspects of love I think everyone should experience at least once in their life."

Wild 'N Out tapings always end with a crew after-party. I'm pretty sure there may have been a no-photo rule, but even if I were to attempt snapping a photo with my iPhone, the clouds of smoke pouring out of joints and bowls and whatever else, would be too thick for my Instagram followers to determine what they're looking at. The last thing Cannon shares with me before

I head out is, "I just want to bring good energy and vibe on a high frequency." He then adds that his mission is "giving others the opportunity to step in and take over."

Those opportunities can be seen during the party's last call. The room is a veritable hodgepodge of young YouTube sensations, Instagram models and former Vine stars, all drinking, playing pool—and did I mention smoking? 'Cause there was a whole hell of a lot of smoking—but more importantly, enjoying their adjoined moment in the limelight they wouldn't have had without Cannon. Out of everything I heard, experienced and saw that day, his ability to pull people to the center stage with him is, out of all of his traits and achievements, the most wild.



BISEX- UALITY IS POWER

On National Coming Out Day, we salute
the belief in the equal experience of love.



Before coming out, Devon Moretti, age 23, was filled with “fear and shame” for wanting to be in relationships with both men and women.

BY **ZACHARY ZANE**

An Instagram-era personal trainer whose mantra is to help clients “feel confident AF in the

bedroom,” Moretti describes her heterosexual sex life as having been “traditional” and one in which she routinely found herself in a submissive role. “This was in line with what I’d been socialized to believe as ‘normal,’” she says, “[so] I never questioned it.”

The first time she had sex with another woman was during group sex. As she is polyamorous, her boyfriend was present. The experience changed her life. “I later realized how well [bisexuality] fit my sexual preferences, in how it allowed me to experience fluidity with regard to the power dynamic of sex,” she tells *Playboy*. In other words, Moretti’s bisexuality linked her mind with her body like never before. When asked to describe her sex life now, she doesn’t mince words: “Excitement and curiosity,” she says, adding that she’s now “more open to fluctuation with women.”

No matter your sex, the way in which you approach intimate relationships will no doubt evolve when you embrace or explore an attraction to multiple genders. (I assert this as someone who identifies as a bisexual male.) For heterosexual people, separating oneself from the heteronormative world and the traditional scripts society has imposed upon us—either consciously or subconsciously—can allow one to approach intimacy outside conventional constraints, such as power politics of dominance versus submission in the bedroom.

For American women in particular, who are most encouraged by society and pop culture to be patient, giving and submissive lovers, the possibilities of sex can feel immediately endless. But while pornography would lead you to believe that almost every woman on the planet has had a bisexual experience, the Centers of Disease Control reported in 2016 that only 5.5 percent of women in the United States identify as bisexual; one-third of those women are out of the closet. While a healthy amount of bisexual women are content settling down with a cisgender, heterosexual man for their rest of their lives, many crave more.

For National Coming Out Day, I interviewed some of these women, who speak frankly about being turned on by their abilities to push the boundaries of traditional intimacy

and adopt different roles in the boudoir, based on their partners. Of course, there are many obvious reasons why having sex with a man and woman is different. The permutations of physical size, body parts and positions can open the door to hundreds of new sexual experiences.

But society likes to dictate “customary” ways to have sex. That is, the man is usually more dominant, whereas the woman plays the more submissive role. That’s why any man (or woman) may find it so hot when a woman takes control, pushes you down and rides you reverse cowboy. It’s not what’s usually done on a one-night stand.

...

“My favorite thing about being bisexual is that it gives me more options to see myself in different ways,” says Candice Leigh, a somatic sex educator. “When I’m with men, I love being an equal or more submissive.” But when she’s with women, she loves the “masculine energy” and being a top. “[It] makes me feel powerful and assertive, and that follows me into my life, work and dealings with other people. With each of my previous girlfriends, I’ve developed a masculine side and certain qualities get refined, such as being more present, energetic and goal-oriented. I feel more driven to make money and buy her gifts.”

Devon, the physical trainer, also tells me she changes it up sexually depending on the gender of her partner. “With men, I’m completely submissive. With women, I’m open to switching roles and expressing dominance.” She also questions whether being submissive actually has anything to do with identifying as a woman or bisexual or conversely, with the gender or sexual orientation of her partners. Instead, she believes it’s about their energy and how her partners approach having sex.

“When I enter into a sexual encounter, the one whose dom energy is greater takes the dominant role. When I’ve been with cisgender women who were very dominant, I’ve fallen into the submissive role rather easily,” she says. “With other women, it’s more of a switch situation.” Bisexuality, then, “isn’t the sole variable to determine which role I play in any given encounter,” she says. One’s preferred power dynamic changes with each partner.

Dr. Nicole Prause, who has PhD in clinical science with a focus on sexual psychophysiology, supports the idea that there’s nothing inherently different about being bisexual that would change sexual behavior. Prause studies how the brain and body work together to produce a sexual response. She says she suspects “very little changes sexually when a woman changes her stated orientation

to bisexual or fluid. However, there is evidence that general feelings of shame, distress and anxiety are lower after coming out. Openly adopting a label likely does not change sexual behavior—but it is likely to improve feelings about those behaviors.”

Improving feelings surrounding those behaviors are what leads to exploration and playing with power dynamics in the bedroom. That’s why national recognition of LGBTQ experiences, such as National Coming Out Day, is so important for the queer and sex-positive communities. Often, it takes embracing an identity and claiming a label—in the case of Devon and Leigh, bisexual—to feel comfortable enough to explore various power dynamics and to rid oneself of the shame, confusion and guilt one may feel when toward different types of sex.

“Being a bisexual woman is a complete privilege and luxury,” Candice says. “[Embracing] my sexuality has been the greatest source of power, discovery, direction, self love and highest spiritual path I’ve ever found, and I certainly attribute what I have learned by playing with different genders.”





**OPENLY ADOPTING A LABEL LIKELY DOES
NOT CHANGE SEXUAL BEHAVIOR—BUT IT
IS LIKELY TO IMPROVE FEELINGS ABOUT
THOSE BEHAVIORS.**

PLAYMATE OF THE YEAR



MATTIE SPEARS

STYLING: JUDY GOLERO
HAIR: TAYLOR STEVE
MAKEUP: NICOLE MARRERO
@THEMATTIESPEARS





Tell us something surprising about you?

I'm a small-town Southern Belle, living in the small town of Tallahassee! Some things I love doing are, spending time with my family and friends, traveling and playing music on my Banjo

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?

I was, it has always been a dream of mine to shoot with playboy hoping to be centerfold for Playboy USA

What inspires you?

Working with an amazing crew and reaching my goals

Why did you choose to pursue a career in modeling?

Since I was little I was always inspired and fascinated by the beauty and style of the fashion and modeling industry. Seeing models walk across the catwalk and look so graceful has always been a goal of mine.

Who do you look up to in the modeling industry?

Two main icons I look up to are Elsa Hosk and Gigi Hadid, they have an amazing presence in the modeling world and I hope one day I can be on the same level.

What are some of your hobbies?

Some of my hobbies consist of fishing, hunting, and you can always count on me to get down and dirty playing in the mud!

Name three things on your Bucket list?

Traveling to all fifty states.
Walk the Victoria Secret Runway.
Meet Elsa Hosk.

Turn-ons?

Someone who can play an instrument and can sing, easy going and knows how to have fun!

Turn-offs?

Anyone who doesn't go after their dreams.

Describe us your perfect date?

My perfect date would be somewhere secluded, a picnic on the beach or even driving around to a new place. I like to go on adventures.

Which world capitol would you like to visit, and why?

I'd like to travel to Cairo Egypt to see the pyramids.

What is your mantra?

Be groovy or leave, man

PLAYMATE OF THE YEAR









PLAYMATE OF THE YEAR





PLAYBOY INTERVIEW: STAN LEE

Playboy joined the Marvel legend in April 2014 to discuss his amazing life with superheroes

At 91, Stan Lee is what you might call a superhero emeritus. His epic adventures are mostly behind him, and his powers are on the wane. (He can't hear or see so well, and a pacemaker regulates his heart.) But the comic-book writer who dreamed up Spider-Man, the X-Men, the Hulk, Iron Man and the Fantastic Four still works five days a week, travels wherever convention geeks gather and tops each autograph with his trademark "Excelsior!". The son of poor Jewish immigrants from Romania, Stanley Martin Lieber (he later shortened it legally) never became the novelist he aspired to be while growing up on New York's Upper West Side. But fantasizing about radioactive arachnids, magnetic force fields and vixens such as Black Widow gave him a great living and a legacy that will outlive us all.

In 1939, Lee's uncle helped get him an assistant's job at Timely Comics, a company

the boss, Martin Goodman (a relative of Lee's), later renamed Marvel. Showing early promise providing text for Captain America, Lee was installed as a Marvel editor at the age of 18, an "interim" gig he ended up keeping until 1972. For much of that time, Lee plodded away in the Marvel writers' bullpen to the point of burnout. Only after his wife, Joan, a British former model, pushed him to create characters "the way you've always wanted to" did Lee's career take off.

Between 1961 and 1965, in one of pop culture's most remarkable creative bursts, Lee, working with freelance artists including Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko, created the key characters in what became known as the Marvel Revolution. (Kirby's estate would later sue for pieces of that action.) Superheroes were no longer two-dimensional goody-goodies but quirky, angst-ridden and flawed. The Fantastic Four bickered. The

Hulk and the X-Men struggled with their alter egos. Even Spider-Man, a character who came to Lee — or so the story goes — as he observed a fly walking up a wall, was a wreck inside.

Today, Lee's creations are enjoying their widest audiences ever. After declaring bankruptcy in 1996, Marvel powered back with blockbuster movies, digital entertainment and, yes, more comic books. Disney acquired the company for \$4.2 billion in 2009, though, surprisingly, Lee didn't see a dime of that. By then he had formed his own company, POW! Entertainment. But he will always be Mr. Marvel.

Contributing Editor David Hochman spent a couple of days with Lee at his Beverly Hills offices. "Stan has the sandpaper growl of a bygone era, but he's remarkably sharp, plugged in and quick with a comeback. We should all be as cool as Stan Lee at his age."





So Playboy wants to know all about my sex life?

If that's where you would like to begin.

It's interesting. Years and years ago, the magazine was considering doing one of these interviews with me, but I guess it wasn't the time. One of your editors said, "We know Stan Lee. We love Stan Lee. Stan Lee is a friend of Hef's. But Spider-Man is more famous than Stan is." Does this mean I'm finally bigger than Spider-Man?

The case can certainly be made. The characters you created decades ago dominate pop culture. Iron Man 3 was the highest-grossing film in 2013. Marvel's The Avengers was 2012's biggest. X-Men: Days of Future Past could easily rule 2014. Not to mention TV, publishing, merchandising and gaming. ***How do you account for the continued success of these vintage superheroes?***

It's because I wrote them so magnificently, don't you think? Actually, I have a theory. May we become philosophical?

Please.

It's an extension of the fairy tales we read as kids. Or the monster stories or stories about witches and sorcerers. You get a little older, and you can't bother with fairy tales and monster stories anymore, but I don't think you ever outgrow your love for things that are fantastic, that are bigger than you are—the giants or the creatures from other planets or people with superpowers who can do things you can't.

The added appeal of so many of these characters is that they were extraordinary but ordinary at the same time. That made them relatable. The Fantastic Four had unusual powers, but they were also a kind of family with foibles. Mr. Fantastic, for instance, could be a real bore. And Spider-Man was like a lot of teenage boys—confused, troubled. He had problems trying to make his way in the world and coping with being a superhero. The Thing and the Hulk were disoriented monsters—monstrous freaks, as it were—which gave them a certain amount of pathos. The X-Men were magnificent misfits. Then you had Daredevil, who was blind but could do things better than most sighted people. I did not create Captain America, but I attempted to make him more than just a strongman who fought the bad guys. I tried to give him a personality and

his own fears and hang-ups and frustrations. Or how about Doctor Strange? I love that guy, a surgeon whose hands get shattered in an accident. He has to struggle to find his way and eventually learns magic in the ancient mystical tradition. He becomes the most powerful magician the cosmos has ever known. They haven't made a Doctor Strange movie yet, but they will.

So you see, comic books to me are fairy tales for grown-ups. Iron Man, the Avengers, Spider-Man and all the rest are popular for the same reason "Jack and the Beanstalk" is still popular after a million years. They're good stories about characters that are like us but also larger than us. That's the end of my philosophy lesson. It should be carved in stone.

From a creative standpoint, what were you experiencing during that intense period from 1961 to 1965 when you wrote The Fantastic Four, The Amazing Spider-

Honestly, what you see is the real me, particularly if what you see is a wonderful, adorable, interesting, exciting kind of guy.

Man, The Avengers—which included the characters Thor, the Hulk, Iron Man and Loki—Daredevil and The X-Men, among others?

To be honest, I could have done it earlier; I could have done it later. It was only because my boss asked me to do it. For instance, after I had done Fantastic Four, Martin, my publisher, said, "Give me another bunch of heroes." He also wasn't thrilled that our competition, DC Comics, had the Justice League. So I did what I knew how to do. I created another group of characters.

First, I had to come up with an origin. How does this group get their superpowers? Well, the Fantastic Four had been clobbered by cosmic rays. The Hulk was hit with gamma rays. Incidentally, I had no idea what cosmic rays or gamma rays were, but they sounded good. And they were the only rays I knew. I had run out of rays, so what the hell was I going to do for this new group?

I took the cowardly way out and said they were born that way; they're mutants. In fact, I called them the Mutants. Martin hated the name, so we changed it to the X-Men. At a certain point, we had every variety of superhero with every possible origin tale and power.

Yet somehow they all lived in New York City. Oh, that was convenient for me since I lived there myself. To me, these characters existed only if I could picture them around town. Tony Stark, Iron Man, for example, was very wealthy and lived in a mansion on Central Park. The Fantastic Four lived in the Baxter Building, which was farther downtown. They could then guest star in one another's books. One day I wrote a story in which Spider-Man, who lived in Forest Hills, Queens, decides he's not making enough money being a superhero and thinks maybe he'll join the Fantastic Four. There might be a buck in it for him. So he goes to the Fantastic

Four headquarters and swings into the window. He says, "I want to join you guys." They say, "We're not looking for anybody." So he doesn't join them.

I had fun with all these characters because I literally knew where they lived, as well as what their personalities were. All that was left for me to do was make up the villains, which was even more fun than making up the heroes. Until I ran out of animal names, I was OK. There was the Lizard, the

Scorpion, Doctor Octopus, the Vulture, the Rhino.

It sounds like fun, but the pressure must have been intense. By 1968, Marvel was putting out 50 million comic books a year.

Pressure is not the word. I was always on the precipice. If anything went wrong, I'd fall. You see, I was not only the head writer but I was also the editor. It was my responsibility to make sure the books were sent to the printer on time. If we ever missed a printing date, we had to pay for that printing time anyway, which would be thousands of dollars.

Some months we were doing 40, 50 books. And not only superheroes. You had all those other types too—My Romance, Her Romance, Their Romance. My publisher loved Westerns with the word kid in them, so I had Two-Gun Kid, Texas Kid, Rawhide Kid, every other kind of kid. In those days, I was just grinding out stuff.



What's your role at Marvel today?

Mostly I'm just a pretty face they keep for the public. My entire career, I treated Marvel like one big ad campaign, with slogans like "Make mine Marvel," "Welcome to the Marvel age of comics" and so forth. After a while, I became Marvel's ambassador to the world. I've lectured in every city in the country probably two or three times. I've been to China, Europe, Japan, Australia and every place in between. Today, my main focus is my own company, POW! Entertainment, which stands for Purveyors of Wonder, and we have projects we're doing independent of Marvel. We have a television movie, another movie we're doing with partners in China, as well as one in India. We're doing a line of children's books and Stan Lee's Superhumans series on the web.

I have no standing at Marvel where I decide what projects get made or who gets

could buy a country now if he wanted.

Yeah, but George Lucas did it all by himself. He came up with the ideas. He produced the movies. He wrote and directed them and held the rights to the merchandising. It was all his. In my case, I worked for the publisher. If the books didn't sell, the publisher went broke—and a lot of publishers did go broke. Marvel took a gamble doing what it did. The artist and writer took a gamble hitching up with the publisher by hoping the books would sell.

You have to understand that growing up during the Depression, I saw my parents struggling to pay the rent. My father was always unemployed, and when he did have a job, he was a dress cutter. Not very much money there. I was happy enough to get a nice paycheck and be treated well. I always got the highest rate; whatever Martin paid another writer, I got at least that much. It was

Kidding aside, one issue dogs you and affects your legacy—the perception that you get too much credit for characters you created with artists such as Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko. You have gone out of your way to acknowledge their contributions and authorship, but the controversy lingers. Can anything be done to settle the situation and do right by these guys once and for all? I don't know what you mean by doing right by them. I always tried to show them in the most favorable light, even in the credits. There was never a time when it just said "by Stan Lee." It was always "by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko" or "by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby." I made sure their names were always as big as mine.

As far as what they were paid, I had nothing to do with that. They were hired as freelance artists, and they worked as freelance artists. At some point, they

If I were dead and could come back to life, I wouldn't go around trying to kill people. I'd be saying, 'Wow! I'm the luckiest guy in the world. Isn't this terrific? Hello, you wonderful person. Let's go out and have fun.'

hired, and certainly none at Disney, which now owns Marvel. I'm a guy they hire as a writer or producer and also to go to conventions and do things like that.

Just to be clear, you don't own any rights to the characters you created.

I never did. I was always a Marvel employee, a writer for hire and, later, part of management. My role at Marvel is strictly honorary. Marvel always owned the rights to these characters. If I owned them, I probably wouldn't be talking to you now.

Disney paid more than \$4 billion for Marvel a few years ago. Did you at least get a Tony Stark-like helicopter in the deal?

I'll tell you something that just happened. My daughter was looking at the internet the other day and read that Stan Lee has an estimated \$250 million. I mean, that's ridiculous! I don't have \$200 million. I don't have \$150 million. I don't have \$100 million or anywhere near that.

Don't you think you should?

No.

George Lucas created fewer characters but

a very good job. I was able to buy a house on Long Island. I never dreamed I should have \$100 million or \$250 million or whatever that crazy number is. All I know is I created a lot of characters and enjoyed the work I did.

One of the greatest Marvel characters has been Stan Lee. You appeared in the comic strips, in a column called Stan's Soapbox and in Hitchcock-like cameos in the Marvel movies.

I even played one character modeled after Hef, in Iron Man. They were all fun to do. The one I got the biggest kick out of was probably in the Fantastic Four movie when I wasn't invited to the wedding of Sue and Reed, and they wouldn't let me in. I said, "But I'm Stan Lee," and the security guy pushes me aside.

Where does the comic-book Stan Lee end and the real you begin?

Honestly, what you see is the real me, particularly if what you see is a wonderful, adorable, interesting, exciting kind of guy. Then, boy, they've got me pegged. Please say he said that with a laugh.

apparently felt they should be getting more money. Fine, it was up to them to talk to the publisher. It had nothing to do with me. I would have liked to have gotten more money too. I never made an issue of it. I got paid per page for what I wrote, the same rate as the other writers — maybe a dollar a page more.

If you ask me, should they have been paid more? Then you have to say, shouldn't John Romita have been paid more? Shouldn't Gil Kane have been paid more? Shouldn't John Buscema have? They were all great Marvel artists. In other words, if somebody draws a strip and it becomes successful, do you go back? I don't know. That's the reason I've never been a businessman and never want to be a businessman. I don't know how to deal with those things.

You were part of Marvel management for many years.

That's true. And twice, not once, I offered a job to Jack Kirby. I said to him, "Jack, why don't you work for Marvel with me?" I was the art director at the time. I said, "You be the art director. I'll just be the editor and



head writer, and you'll have that security." He wouldn't do it. He didn't want to. I would have loved him to work side by side with me. I used to marvel at the way Jack drew. He would draw something as if it had appeared in his mind and he was just tracing what he had thought of already. I never saw a man draw as quickly as Jack did. "Come work with me, Jack," I said. But he said no. He didn't want a staff job. With him, as with Ditko, I don't see where they were unfairly treated.

Kirby died in 1994. Do you remember the last time you saw him?

I'll tell you, the last thing Jack Kirby said to me was very strange. I met him at a comic-book convention right before the end. He wasn't that well. He walked over and said, "Stan, you have nothing to reproach yourself about." He knew people were saying things about me, and he wanted to let me know I hadn't done anything wrong in his eyes. I think he realized it. Then he walked away. I went to his funeral, by the way.

What was that like?

Well, it was terrible. I mean, he shouldn't have died so young. [Editor's note: Kirby died at 76.] I stayed in the back row because I didn't want anybody to see me. It was Jack's funeral. His wife, Roz, saw me. She knew I was there. Then I left, and that was it. Jack was a great guy, and so is Steve. I'm sorry anybody feels there's any acrimony. I loved them both.

Steve Ditko is in his 80s now but hasn't made a public appearance in decades. Have you talked to him?

I met him maybe 10 years ago. I was at the Marvel office. We talked for a while, very friendly. I said it would be great if we could do something together again. I would have liked that. I never knew why he quit in the first place. It might have had to do with the fact that I was trying to tell him how to do the stories. With the Green Goblin, we didn't know who the character really was. I wanted him to turn out to be Harry Osborn's father. Ditko said, "No, I don't want it to be. It should be somebody we don't know." So I said, "Steve, the readers have been following the series for the longest time, waiting to find out who he is. If it's somebody they've never seen, they'll be frustrated." Anyway, I couldn't convince him and he certainly couldn't convince me, so that might have been what drove him away. But he never told me and we don't see each other anymore.

On another note, a company known as Stan Lee Media recently sued Disney for \$5 billion, claiming it was owed the rights to your characters. This must be irritating.

It is incredibly irritating, because people think it's me. I did have a company called Stan Lee Media, but it went belly-up. The fellow running it is now in jail. It was an unfortunate situation. For some reason people have spent years and God knows how much money claiming I gave Marvel the rights to the characters. Again, I never had the rights to the characters. The whole thing is based on sand. Unfortunately, I can't get them to stop using my name.

Let's shift gears. Ben Affleck got mixed reviews a decade ago when he played Daredevil. What do you think about him being the new Batman?

I think he's terrific. Daredevil wasn't as successful as some of our other movies, but I think it wasn't written or perhaps directed as I had conceived it. The movie is darker, and they made so much of him and the church. That wasn't the Daredevil I knew. But Ben

much money invested in these films for them to goof around with casting or the basic conception of who these characters are.

Which actress has impressed you most in the Marvel movies?

Jessica Alba was the girl in Fantastic Four, right? She was terrific. I really liked her. Who was the girl in X-Men with the short hair, very pretty?

Halle Berry.

Lovely girl. I spoke to her for a while and really enjoyed her performances.

Of all the women in the comic-book world, who would you have wanted to go on a date with?

I never thought of that. See, I'm going to tell you something you may not be aware of: They were fictitious characters.

But some were sexier than others.

To me, the sexiest of all was Mary Jane in Spider-Man. I loved the idea. The way I'd written it, Spider-Man's aunt May was continually trying to get Peter Parker to meet the niece of her next-door neighbor. "She's such a nice girl. I think you'd like her."

Well, to a teenage boy, hearing she's a nice girl is the biggest turnoff in the world. Peter, as I remember, kept avoiding meeting her. One day I made it the last panel of the story. He couldn't avoid it anymore. He said, "All right, I'll meet her." He opens the door and there's this hot-looking babe who says to him, "Face it, tiger, you just hit the jackpot." I

don't know why they didn't put that in the movie. I just love that whole idea. "Face it, tiger, you just hit the jackpot." He sees this sizzling girl, and he'd been expecting some drab nobody.

The Marvel bullpen was such a boys' club. You guys must have had fun behind the scenes thinking about which characters were having sex with each other and who had the biggest codpieces.

Obviously we always talked about Mr. Fantastic and how great he would be for any woman, with the ability to stretch the way he could. But that was about all.

These were colorful characters conceived in colorful times. Were psychedelics or other drugs involved?

I'm not aware that any of the artists took drugs. It would shock me to learn that Kirby, for instance, was taking drugs. Or John Romita or Gil Kane. These guys were family men, hardworking guys, and they were simply that talented. Almost any of them could have been major movie directors. When an artist

Obviously we always talked about Mr. Fantastic and how great he would be for any woman, with the ability to stretch the way he could.

ought to do a great job as Batman. People say he's too old. Listen, from my perspective, he's still a very young man.

Where do you stand on Tobey Maguire's Spider-Man versus Andrew Garfield's?

When I first saw Tobey Maguire in the role, I thought, Here's the absolute perfect Peter Parker. When I saw Andy Garfield in the role, I thought, Andy's the most perfect. They're both great and they're both different. It's not like they cast the first guy off the street for these parts. People much smarter than I am about these things are casting these movies. They do a fantastic job.

What did you think when Garfield raised the idea in an interview last year that Spider-Man might be gay?

Listen, I can't control what actors say or how they behave. I can only comment on how they act, and like I said, Andy's terrific in the role. I don't have a line in the sand about Spider-Man. I guess if he were fat and flabby and didn't look anything like a superhero, you might hear from me, but there's too



draws a panel, he has the widest choice. He can make it a close-up shot, a long shot, an overhead shot, a strange angle, a head-on shot. And they would make these creative decisions quickly and under major deadline pressure. Drugs? I don't think they would have survived. They certainly never came into the office in a different mood, looking a little spaced out or whatever. And I definitely wasn't doing drugs. I was never into them, and I know nothing about them.

Did you ever try marijuana?

No. I hardly ever smoked a cigarette. I bought these thin cheroots because you didn't have to inhale. I would puff on them, but I eventually gave them up because I was burning holes in my sweaters. People read into the fact that I called the character Mary Jane, but honestly, I had no idea it was a nickname for marijuana. I never understood why people take drugs. They're habit forming, and they can kill you. I didn't need anything to pep me up or make me feel more creative, and I didn't need them to help me with women.

There's a curious rumor online that you and Mick Jagger would occasionally go to bars together to see who could pick up women faster, and that often it wasn't Mick Jagger.

Oh, it's not true. But I will say, a woman will go with any recognizable celebrity even if you're the ugliest celebrity in the world. That's just the law of fame. I did pretty well in my day. I had a Buick convertible four-door Phaeton that used to impress the girls. But you can't compete with rock stars. I've spent time with Aerosmith and Alice Cooper and Kiss. Gene Simmons actually put his blood into a vat of ink so we could say the Kiss comic books we created were printed with his blood. That's the kind of thing girls are looking for.

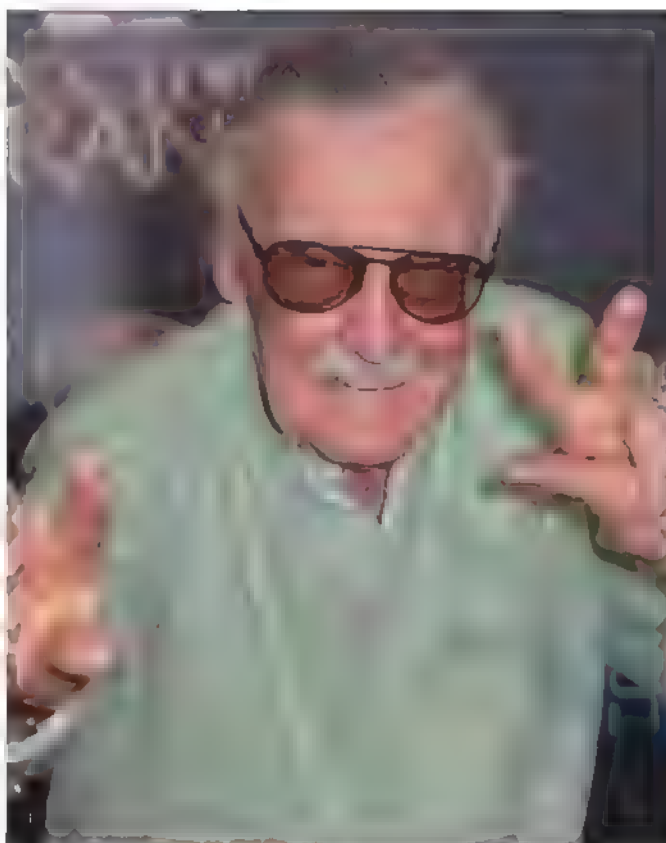
You've been married to your wife, Joan, for almost 70 years. What's the secret to a lasting marriage?

Marrying the right girl. We get along fine even though we both have strong personalities. My wife, whom I adore, is half Irish and has a very hot temper. I remember years ago we were arguing over something and she got angry. She said, "I'll show you!" and picked up the Remington Noiseless Portable typewriter I'd used to write *The Fantastic Four* and *Spider-Man* and all the rest, and banged it against the floor. It shattered into a million pieces. I like to tease her and say, "Joanie, if we had that typewriter now, do you know what we could auction it off for?"

Do you have *Amazing Fantasy No. 15*, the comic book in which *Spider-Man* debuts, hidden in a vault somewhere?

No. I never collected them. In those days, we didn't think of it. When we were doing these books, we never knew the artwork or scripts would have any value. We were in a small office. The original pages were very big and thick, and a book then had, like, 48 or 64 pages. After the book was printed, the printer would send the original pages of artwork and all the color proofs back to us. We had no room for them. We gave everything away. Some kid would come up to deliver sandwiches from the drugstore and we'd say, "Hey, kid, on your way out, take these pages and throw them somewhere." If one of those guys had brains enough to save some stuff, he'd be a very lucky man right now.

Fewer kids read comic books today than they did in the heyday. Does that make you sad?



I didn't know they weren't. Really? See, I'm not much of a scholar about what's happening. I just do my own thing. But it's not only comic books. Everything's changing. Everything's being done on computer or iPhone or iPad. The whole language is changing. Words end up abbreviated because of texting.

Do you have any advice for comic-book-store owners?

If I were a comic-book-store owner, I'd be wondering how I could get into electronic comics, digital comics or anything else. It's not just comic-book-store owners I'm worried about. I'd be concerned if I owned any bookstore. But I don't know. I'm old-fashioned. I hope there will always be a little comic book for kids and teenagers and grown-ups to hold, because nothing replaces the experience of turning those pages, of

smelling those pages. But yes, everything is changing. In 10 years we probably won't recognize this world. Thank goodness we have other media. It's what keeps these characters alive.

Let's talk about the new *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* television series. Is it close to your original conception?

It's a funny thing about S.H.I.E.L.D. I started it because there was a popular TV show at the time, *The Man From U.N.C.L.E.*, and I wanted to come up with a special group of my own. I called it the Supreme Headquarters, International Espionage, Law-Enforcement Division. I thought it was kind of cute. They've given the word new meaning now. To me, the greatest part about S.H.I.E.L.D. was Nick Fury, and I hope we get to see a lot of him on the show. He'd been in an earlier

comic book of mine, *Sgt. Fury and His Howling Commandos*, and when I retired him, I got so many letters asking where he went, I brought him back as a colonel. He was the toughest son of a bitch I ever created, and Kirby did a wonderful job with him.

Many people don't know that your younger brother, Larry Lieber, helped create *Iron Man* and other characters. How come he never got more acclaim?

Larry was always a good writer and a good artist. He could do almost anything I asked him to do. He scripted not only the first *Iron Man* but also the first *Thor*, and he still does the daily *Spider-Man* newspaper strips. The only problem is that Larry could be a perfectionist. It wasn't that he was faster or slower than other artists, but he had a hard time letting go of his drawings unless he was 100 percent satisfied with them. He always worked on things even after I said they were great. I think it just made the whole process a little harder for him.

Which Marvel character has surprised you the most in terms of its success?

Probably *Iron Man*. But much of that success is because of the movie. I didn't know what to think when Robert Downey Jr. was announced as *Iron Man*. I couldn't picture him. When I created the character, I kind of thought of Howard Hughes because he was an adventurer, an inventor, a millionaire in those days, and he was strange. To me, Downey wasn't a superhero; he was Chaplin. But the instant I saw him, I said, "He's *Iron Man*." I think it's the greatest bit of casting ever.

Of all the characters I've done, *Iron Man* is the most popular with women. I get it. He's a billionaire and he's handsome and glamorous, plus he needs somebody to look after him. He's got a weak heart. "Oh, if only



I knew a man like that." We got more fan mail from women for that book than any other. And now the movie has made him our most popular character after Spider-Man.

Let's go back to the start of your career for a minute. Do you remember the first comic book you ever wrote?

It was a prose story in one of the Captain America books, a two-page story set in type. Nobody read those stories. That's why they let me do one. But you couldn't call a comic book a magazine and get the magazine postal rates unless you had two pages of type. One day I was hanging around filling inkwells and erasing pages for the guys, and someone said, "Hey, Stan, we need a two-page story." So I wrote one. And that was that.

You went off to the Army in World War II and wrote military pamphlets with an elite group that included Frank Capra, William Saroyan and Theodor Geisel. What's your standout memory?

That Dr. Seuss was slow. In the comic-book world, you live and die on your speed, but Geisel was slow. Most of them were slow. I

war based on that.

Is it true you continued to work for Marvel that whole time?

That's right. Whenever I was free, I'd write something new. I bought a car with the money they sent me while I was in the Army. I used to pal around with a lot of the officers. Some of them were my best friends, majors and captains, even though I was an enlisted man. I wasn't supposed to pal around with them, so I'd wear an olive drab sweater so the rank didn't show. We went out and drank and had fun. But I was never a less than responsible driver

Speaking of that, do you remember the moment you thought up the phrase "With great power comes great responsibility"?

The honest-to-God truth is I thought I made it up for Uncle Ben to say. But then somebody wrote to tell me Voltaire had said it in French a couple of centuries before. I never read Voltaire. I don't speak French. I just liked the way it sounded.

When did you first realize you'd created a worldwide sensation with your characters?

There were a lot of moments. We'd get letters

don't, something else will come up. The nice thing about stories is you can always find another angle that'll be good. To be honest, I let go a long time ago. I let go of these characters around 1972 when I became publisher. I was never a real publisher because publishers are businessmen, and I'm not. But as publisher, I stopped writing the books, for the most part. All these characters eventually find their way.

The Hulk has always been especially difficult. Even the popular 1970s TV show with Lou Ferrigno is more camp than classic.

They've tried a green Hulk and a red Hulk and a blue Hulk. Everybody tries something, but I think everybody does it wrong. In the last movie he looked pretty good, and the actor was pretty good. But they made him too big and started changing his color. It's such a simple thing. It's like Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the way I conceived him. He's a scientist who turns into a monster. He hates the monster, and he wants to cure himself of turning into it. The monster hates the scientist and doesn't want to become that weak nothing kind of guy. He likes being the Hulk. To me, as a writer, I could play with that and come up with

I was always looking at people who were doing better than I was and wishing I could do what they were doing—Steven Spielberg or a writer like Harlan Ellison, or even Hugh Hefner. Part of me always felt I hadn't quite made it yet.

was writing faster than all of them. One day the major who was in charge of our unit said, "Sergeant, will you work a little slower? You're making the other guys look bad." I wrote all these training films about things I had no knowledge of. I remember I did one film, The Nomenclature and Operation of the 16 mm IMO Camera Under Battle Conditions. What got the most attention, though, was something I wrote about venereal disease.

You wrote a sex manual?

No, they needed me to help the enlisted men avoid disease. They were always getting VD. So they had what they called prophylactic stations, little one-room buildings with green lights inside. After you'd had carnal knowledge of a female, you would go to the pro station and get disinfected in the most horrible way. My mission was to tell the troops to go to the pro station after they'd had sex. So I drew a little cartoon of a soldier. There's the green light. Over his head there's a dialogue balloon that says, "VD? Not me!" They printed a couple million of them. I figure we probably won the

from all over and then visitors, including some famous ones. I remember being visited by Federico Fellini. He came in and said he wanted to meet me. I'll never forget. I had a tiny office at the end of a long hall. I get a call he's coming and see Fellini walking toward me, accompanied by four of his assistants, all dressed the same in black raincoats, all in descending order of height. Fellini was the tallest, and behind him were the four others. It was the funniest sight. I wanted to talk about him and the movies he'd made, 8½ and all the others. He wanted to talk about Spider-Man. Years later, he was nice enough to show my daughter around Italy and take care of her. It would have been interesting to collaborate with him. He would have been good with X-Men. Fellini and Magneto would have been an interesting combination.

In the next X-Men movie, the 1970s X-Men meet the modern-day team. Do you ever worry someone's going to screw up your original characters?

I don't even think about it. I know they'll usually come up with something interesting, and if they

a million plots. For some reason, Hollywood keeps making the Hulk this big, crazy brute. One day somebody should go back to the basics. ***Are you excited to see Avengers: Age of Ultron?*** Excited? Sure. But I have to be honest. I don't have any idea who the hell Ultron is. He was a character developed after I stopped being involved in the Avengers story. I was asking some guys in the office who Ultron is, but then my phone rang and I got busy and never found out. Marvel introduced so many characters and strange situations, it's hard to keep track of them all.

True, but why haven't we created new superheroes? We still mostly rely on yours and a handful of others, such as Superman and Batman, to save the day.

Well, publishers don't need new ones now. They needed them when I was doing them. My publisher would say, "Hey, Stan, that last one sold very well. Dream up another one—or four—for me." Now they don't have to say that. All they have to say is "When are we going to find the time to make a movie out of Ant-Man



or publish another edition of Silver Surfer?" We have plenty of material in reserve that audiences love. And you know Hollywood appreciates a sure thing. There aren't enough opening weekends or TV channels or bookstore shelves for all the titles Marvel alone plans to put out. It's not just Captain America, Fantastic Four, Daredevil and the rest. We have dozens to draw on, and fans are always asking, "Stan, when are they going to come out with a Black Panther movie?" Incidentally, I would love to see a Black Panther movie myself. I know they're working on one. But then fans will say, "What about Ant-Man? Or the Inhumans? Or the Annihilator?"

After decades of events such as Comic-Con and now your own Comikaze comic-book expo, you must get tired of geeky fan questions.

I enjoy the questions and always try to give a funny answer. For example, they'll say, "Who could win, the Hulk or Galactus?" I'd say, "It depends on who's writing the story." "What makes you work so hard and do all these stories?" I tell them greed. Even if I've heard the question 800 times before, I always try to give them an answer they don't expect. Like "What superpower would you want?" I say, "Luck, because if you have that you have everything." Actually, that one I believe.

You mentioned Ant-Man a minute ago. What's the status of the movie version?

It's coming along. [Editor's note: The film, directed by Edgar Wright and featuring Hank Pym, played by Michael Douglas, and Scott Lang, played by Paul Rudd, is scheduled for July 2015.]

What's terrific about Ant-Man is that he's small and can do a lot of things a normal-size person can't, but he's also incredibly vulnerable. The most important thing with any hero is he has to be vulnerable. If it's somebody who could never be hurt, that's no fun. One of the problems I always had with Superman was, how can I worry about him? You can't kill him, you can't hurt him. But with a guy as small as Ant-Man, there are so many things he can do, but every minute of his life he's in danger. There's this tension of thinking he'd better get big again fast. To give you another example, in the movies Batman has gotten more vulnerable in recent years, and it's made him more interesting

Speaking of Batman, what was a night on the town like with your friend and Batman creator

Bob Kane?

He was always late, first of all. We'd make a dinner reservation for 7:30, and Bob and his wife would get there at eight o'clock or 8:30. If we were half an hour late, they'd come half an hour later. It became a game. They were always later than we were. Then we'd sit down, and within a few seconds he'd say to the waiter, "You know who I am? I'm Bob Kane. I draw Batman. Look, I'll show you." And he'd draw a little Batman. He was happy being who he was. You can't fault it. He was never on time for dinner, but he loved Batman and loved being recognized for it, and we'd have a great time talking up these characters.



I've had a lot of good times.

Has it been an easy life for you?

Life is never completely without its challenges. I have a new heart valve that was put in a couple of years ago. I have a touch of asthma. I get tired sometimes. But I haven't had a lot of angst. I mean, certainly early in my career, before The Fantastic Four, I struggled. I felt I was never going to get anywhere. Even afterward, I was embarrassed to say I wrote comic books for a living. I had a lot of shame about that. Even when I made a good living, my dad didn't think of me as a success. He was pretty wrapped up in himself most of the time. Some of that rubbed off on me.

I was always looking at people who were doing better than I was and wishing I could do what they were doing—Steven Spielberg or a writer like Harlan Ellison, or even Hugh Hefner. Part of me always felt I hadn't quite made it yet.

Did you ever go to therapy?

Never had time, no. But if someone asked me for an evaluation of myself, I'd say I'm a particularly normal, levelheaded guy. I'm just a guy who likes what he does.

You started your career writing obituaries. Have you ever thought about what you'd like yours to say?

I know mine is already written. It's sitting there in the New York Times computers somewhere. It's all ready to go. You can't stop it. I've had a happy life. I don't want anyone to think I treated Kirby or Ditko unfairly. I think we had a wonderful relationship. Their talent was incredible. But the things they wanted weren't in my power to give them.

I'm always looking ahead, even at this age. You know, my motto is "Excelsior." That's an old word that means "upward and onward to greater glory." It's on the seal of the state of New York. Keep moving forward, and if it's time to go, it's time. Nothing lasts forever. Hell, I'm 91 years old. If I have to go while I'm talking to you, I've had a long enough life. I'd hate to leave my wife and my daughter, but heaven knows it's beyond me. And I don't even really believe in heaven.

In the 700th issue of The Amazing Spider-Man, Peter Parker dies in a battle with Doctor Octopus.

Yeah, but he won't die. They'll bring him back, or it'll turn out he didn't really die. It's like Sherlock Holmes. I

loved Sherlock Holmes when I was younger, and there were so many versions. He always made it out of every situation. You never run out of ideas. **Maybe there will be a zombie version of Spidey.** Zombies are puzzling to me. They're all the rage now, but I never understood them. Think about it: If I were dead and could come back to life, I wouldn't go around trying to kill people. I'd be saying, "Wow! I'm the luckiest guy in the world. Isn't this terrific? Hello, you wonderful person. Let's go out and have fun." If I go out in a flash but then somehow make it back, I'm not going to be angry. There's going to be a great big celebration.



IS IT EVER A GOOD IDEA TO GET BACK WITH YOUR EX?

BY **LISA BEEBE**

Before word even got out that Selena Gomez and The Weeknd had broken up, she was already spending time with her ex, Justin Bieber. The Weeknd has also been spotted hanging out with his ex, supermodel Bella Hadid. Despite the photographic evidence and anonymous “insider” quotes, we’re not going to pretend like we know for sure about their relationship statuses. What we do know is that even spending a night with an ex goes against what we’ve always been cautioned by friends, parents, therapist and whoever else we’ve turned to for advice.









YILENA HERNANDEZ

Photography by **MC GREGOR LAPIERRE** *PR by* **PUBLISH PILOT**





What does being a Playboy cover model mean to you?

This is more like an hallucination, fantasy that has come to life. I've always wanted to be part of something meaningful, something that shines and spread out. Being on this cover is just that. It means more than plenty to me.

What is your biggest modeling goal?

As a model and influencer, one of my main goals is to stay different and become much more relevant. We, as models, serve a major purpose. I want not only to be summit of it all, but also to be a bump for those that lack of beliefs and self confidence.

We hear you grew up in Cuba, what was that like?

Growing in Cuba is a blessing! It's tough, rough, edgy, very painful sometimes, yet it shapes you in the perfect form for the lights to come guide you in the proper direction. The utmost part is the self belief. Growing in Cuba taught that if I can make it there, I can make it anywhere.

If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?

I'd pick Dubai and also the next couple of times I probably will be ask that question. It's exquisite and luxurious there. That confirms the authenticity, the perfection, the beauty of things there. It's marvelous and I want to keep on top of the list of all.

What to you like to do to relax?

To relax majority of the time is to think about the next plan. I lose myself in the thinking of my next accomplishment. I find pride, joy, and plenty encouragement in my accomplishments. It help me ease or diminish the strong eager for success that drives in me. It definitely put me at peace.

Favorite TV Show and Movie?

As of right now, my favorite TV Show is America's got talent. I like seeing others grow through opportunities that they ve acquired. My favorite movie of all time which stars my all time crush Lady Gaga, "A Star Is Born."

What is your most embarrassing moment?

I have had quite a few embarrassing moments in my life. There was a time when I tried out for an audition at a modeling agency and the informed me that I don't have the modeling appeal in me. This didn't do much but motivate me to keep pushing.

What is the most romantic thing a guy can do for you?

Most romantic ever done for me was a





day when I was down and could not see myself going any further and that person gave day off activities and took me around to find me more reasons to keep pushing. That to me meant a lot. It was more than just a push.

What do you find most attractive in a guy?

I believe each individual is different. Someone's behavior toward a moment or situation is what I value most. Therefore, I cannot tell unless I'm in the moment.

Name 3 things that you can't live without?

3 things I cannot survive with are my family, which comes first, my positive environment, which keeps me going even when everything is going left, last but not least, my career. I've lived for this and it's all me. I can't see myself without it.

How can our readers follow you on social media?

I have to major social media accounts.
@yilenahernandez on instagram Yilena Tv on youtube





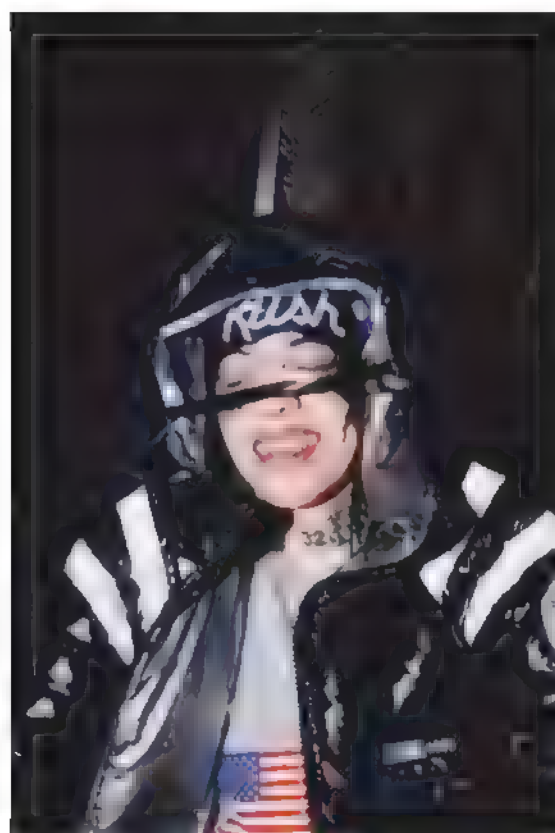




Lil Xan's *Career Is Flamin' Hot*

Playboy joins the polarizing rapper on tour to talk haters, label woes, Cheetos and ex Noah Cyrus

BY DAN HYMAN



"I'm basically everybody's punching bag," Lil Xan tells *Playboy* on a recent October afternoon. Not that he minds. The 22-year-old, whose real name is Diego Leanos, forever looks like a rebellious teenager just awakened from a midday nap, given his short stature and spaced-out eyes. He revels in being known as much as an internet curiosity as a serious musician, and he's certainly playing the part: There are his numerous face tattoos ("Zzzz" under one eye, "Candy" under the other), a "stunt" relationship to pop singer Noah Cyrus (more on that later), his widely derided disregard of rap icon Tupac Shakur and, most

recently, a Cheetos-induced hospital visit.

To him, it's all gravy. "Because, guess what?" says Xan, who has emerged as one of hip-hop's most polarizing new stars. A rectangular messenger bag is slung across his torso, and a "DOPE" beanie is resting just above his eyes while sitting here in the basement dressing room of an Indianapolis concert venue, where he's set to perform in a few hours. That negative attention? "It only helps my career," he says. Sure, many are unaware Xan had zero intention of ever being a rapper and that he nonetheless saw one of his songs go viral last year on

SoundCloud. Or that he was raised dirt-poor and now pays \$8500 a month for his Los Angeles apartment. Frankly, Xan doesn't actually care if you've even heard his music.

"I honestly think it's dope that I'm bigger as a celebrity and a household name than for my music," he says matter-of-factly. Yes, Lil Xan, the video game-obsessed outcast who dropped out of high school at 14 and was living in cockroach-infested motels until he became "a famous rapper," is now tabloid fodder, a topic of discussion in Seth Meyers' late-night monologues. And that works for him. "And now I've even got fucking Andy

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JOE GOLDBER



Cohen talking about me on Bravo,” he says with a wheezing laugh. He kicks up his “cinder block”-heavy Balenciaga shoes on a low-set coffee table and takes a drag from a blunt his rapper-friend and tour mate Steven Cannon declares to be the biggest he’s ever fashioned.

“So you can hate on me all you want,” Lil Xan declares, “but we out here winning.”

Fame came quick for Lil Xan, and he’ll admit he’s still coming to terms with what it all means. “I feel like I’m in the fucking Matrix, bro,” he says of his swift rise to notoriety. “I would never even win a prize at school. I thought I was the most unluckiest kid ever, and then boom,” he says, miming his suddenly being swarmed with attention for his music. “‘Here’s a lot of money! You’re a famous rapper! Go live a great life!’ Like, what the fuck, dude?”

He made his first rap song, a fairly innocuous track titled “Hit My Line,” days before his 20th birthday. Little more than one year later, in November 2017, following the music video for his breakout single “Betrayed” going viral and racking up several million views in a single day in August of that year, Xan signed a major-label deal with Columbia Records.

Xan will tell you he’s not entirely sure what it was about him or his music or that specific moment in time that sparked such intense curiosity or instant attention. Sure, his was good timing, as those musicians with whom he’s often grouped in—other young performers like Lil Pump, Trippie Redd and Smokepurpp, along with the late rappers XXXTentacion and Lil Peep, who all got their start on SoundCloud and combine the visual DIY aesthetic of punk-rock music with depressive, woozy hip-hop verses—were gaining mainstream attention for a genre of music Xan calls “alternative rap.” Though Xan suspects, in his case, it was likely his name (a reference to the prescription drug Xanax, to which he used to be addicted) that first piqued people’s interest.

“People wanted to know, Who is this dude named Lil Xan?” offers DJ Fu, Xan’s co-manager and the in-house producer for Mike Will Made-It’s EarDrummers label. When first learning of Lil Xan, on the recommendation of the rapper’s friends, Fu didn’t believe that

was actually the young man’s stage name. Fu, though, recognized “a natural star” in Xan and soon introduced him to his friend and business partner, Stat Quo, a former rapper with Eminem’s Shady Records. When State came on-board as Xan’s co-manager, he and Fu helped land the rapper his major-label deal. A few months later, Lil Xan’s debut album, *Total Xanarchy*, was released to the public.

• • •

Xan says he’s long been a musical omnivore: He cites Pharrell Williams as his greatest

Nah, I was not that kid.” Fu believes it’s Xan’s laissez-faire approach to his profession, or the idea that the rapper, at least to the outside world, appears not to have worked hard his success, that most irritates his critics. “It’s like if your whole life, you wanted to be a football player, and then this kid comes along that doesn’t even try, and he becomes a fucking star,” Fu offers. “It pisses people off.”

If the criticism hurts him, Xan doesn’t often show it. That hatred, he says, largely exists only in theory. Sure, there were death threats that required him to cancel recent shows in both Chicago and Minneapolis.

But he brushes it off when pressed for his thoughts on something so serious. No, Xan says, he doesn’t feel any such hate or vitriol aimed at himself in his everyday life. “To be honest you, just gotta stay off the internet,” he explains. “The negativity mostly lives on the internet. When I walk outside my house, it’s nothing but ‘I love you, Lil Xan!’ and those are the same motherfuckers calling me names on the Internet.”

• • •

Behind the scenes, however, Xan has experienced his share of growing pains. As his stage name suggests, the rapper was once a heavy user of prescription pills, notably Xanax. During his first tour, Fu says, Lil Xan “was going through a lot of shit with the Xans, and still trying to kick shit and still trying to get over the addiction.” Whether a personal evolution or simply recognizing that promoting drug usage was bad for business, Xan now declares himself against

using Xanax. He still calls his fan base the “Xanarchy Gang,” but says that he stopped using prescription opioids even before Lil Peep’s death from an accidental fentanyl-Xanax overdose, though especially in the wake of this. Still, he adds, “When I made *Xanarchy*, I said I want it to be a brand. Naw, fuck that, I want Xanarchy to be a household name! You see that bus out there?” He motions to a window where outside there sits a massive tour bus with his likeness and the word “Xanarchy” on it in blood-red font. “I have the best fan base in the world. Xanarchy is a cult fan base. I love them all to death.”



sonic influence, and says in his teenage years, he listened to “everything from Beethoven to Drake to fucking Black Flag, Sex Pistols, the Cure, early Arctic Monkeys.” And despite him practically worshipping the rapper Mac Miller, whom he dedicates a portion of his show to following the 26-year-old’s death in September, and whose face appears on the cover of Xan’s forthcoming new album, *Be Safe*, due in December, the rapper admits he never had the intention of becoming a professional emcee: “I was not that kid in high school spitting freestyles like, ‘Yo, I want to be a fucking rapper. Fuck all y’all!’



True to his word, the devoted members of the Xanarchy Gang are waiting outside the venue today in Indianapolis hours before his show. Many of them even paid extra to attend a meet-and-greet and watch his soundcheck. What is it about Xan that generates such passionate adoration? Ask him, and he'll tell you it's because, like many members of the Gang, he knows what it feels like to be misunderstood. "I feel like I'm a voice for the outcasts because I feel like I was the outcast in school," he says. "I can see it in my fans. I like that because my music comforts them to let them know they're not alone. I tell them that every show: 'I am no better than you. We are all human beings. Your flaws are perfections. You are beautiful. You are beautiful, no matter what you look like.'"

"He just has this aura about him," says Madeleine, a beautiful and shapely 20-year-old blonde who drove two hours from Louisville, Ky., to be here. At today's meet-and-greet, she exchanged words with Xan and, moments later, she and Betty—a 40-something clinical psychologist mom who "saw Xan's internet presence and was like, 'Oh,

fucking lying about that shit.'" He harbors no ill will toward her, he explains. "I have no bad blood with her family. I think they're amazing. They were so nice. I wish Noah nothing but the best of luck with her career."

OK, how about when he was recently admitted to the hospital as a result of supposedly eating too many Flamin' Hot Cheetos? "That story is completely real," he assures. "I didn't fake that, bro! I really thought I was fucked up. But this is how the media fucks shit up. I never used the words 'overdosed on Cheetos.' But one blog said 'Lil Xan overdosed,' and then everyone runs with it. But the Cheetos shit was very real. Not fabricated in any way. Ask the nurses and doctors that treated me."

Some things, however, Xan can't be so diplomatic about. Earlier this year, during an interview with Revolt TV, Xan was asked to rate Tupac Shakur as a rapper. He gave the late rapper a "2" out of 10, shrugged and called the widely revered emcee "boring." Backlash in the hip-hop community quickly ensued, and Waka Flocka Flame tweeted, "Lil Xan banned from hip-hop." As a result, Xan

help themselves." Xan is still getting used to life as a famous rapper. "He's a young kid. He wasn't groomed to be an artist," Fu says. "He fell into it. So the things he's going through are just growing pains of being an artist and being the young rebellious kid that he is." Still, it undoubtedly helps to have someone like Anna around. Xan's longtime girlfriend, Anna—who looks the other way when he spends time with other women—also acts as his assistant. "I'm like his mom. I literally do everything," she says with a slightly bemused smile. "You can ask anybody. I make sure he gets dressed in the morning. I give him his toothbrush. I love it, but it's a lot. It's complicated."

So is his future. "I'm probably like eight million fucking years old," he says, after recalling how his mom used to call him an "old soul." "I feel like I'm ready to fucking retire after my third damn tour," Xan adds. "But I'm not gonna. Wanna know why? Because I'm very passionate about music."

Xan frequently refers to himself as an "open book," but later he bristles at a particular question. A simple one,

Labels just wanna fuck you over, bro. Total Xanarchy was put together poorly by the label. Labels are fucking retarded, and they don't understand what's hip.

this guy's cool! That's what's popping!'"—were promptly escorted backstage to hang out and smoke blunts with the rapper and his friends. Later, during an interview, Xan will nod off in Madeleine's bosom.

But now, back in his dressing room, Xan informs his guests, "Grand Rapids was a movie!" referencing the previous night's gig. For reasons unknown, Betty takes that as her cue to grab his crotch. "Oh, my God! This is awesome!" Betty says moments later, assessing her good fortune to be back here with Xan. The rapper doesn't flinch. Maybe giggles a bit. He takes things in stride.

It's why he has no problem discussing potentially sensitive topics. Like, say, his relationship with Noah Cyrus that ended a few months back, with each of them exchanging barbs via social media. Eventually, Xan claimed the entire relationship was staged by his record label.

"I admit it. I owned up to my own shit," he says of dating Cyrus. "There's a time you gotta man the fuck up, dude. Just stop

has done virtually zero press since then, and now he says, "Fuck Revolt. Revolt TV fucked me over. I guess an artist has to get fucked over by a media outlet eventually. But it's almost like people need something to channel their problems at. I guess I'm just that guy."

He's also not pleased with his label, Columbia Records. For one, he says they rushed him to release Total Xanarchy, didn't consult him throughout the rollout process and, save for five tracks, used old tracks he'd previously recorded for it. "Labels just wanna fuck you over, bro," he says. "Total Xanarchy was put together poorly by the label. Down to not even letting me know what the track list was. Or the songs they were putting on it. Labels are fucking retarded, and they don't understand what's hip. They just don't."

"They made a lot of fucking money off me, though," Xan continues. "More than a million. But it's still 'Fuck the label!' With any label, it gets shady after a while. There's no real good labels. There's no labels that really wanna fuck with artists. They wanna

really. How much time does he spend in the recording studio nowadays?

"I'm gonna keep that one a secret," he says, his head reclined on Madeleine's chest. In the meantime, he's willing to share the lyrics to a song he's been working on. It's called "Slow." He says he anticipates it releasing on Halloween, although it still has yet to drop. "We know it's gonna be a fucking hit," he says. How so? "The music. It's so catchy. That song is gonna go crazy."

He puts down a still-lit blunt and smiles, eyes half shut, casually gazing at Madeleine. Later tonight, he'll retreat to his tour bus with her and, that evening, share an Instagram video of her clad only in a towel, declaring her the newest member of the Xanarchy Gang.

But now he's ready to sing his new, sure-to-be smash song to his new friend. "Fuck that hoe. Fuck that hoe. Yah I wanna fuck that hoe," he raps. Madeleine smiles.

Xan pauses and then, apropos of nothing, declares the interview over. He says he's too stoned. He might say something he'll regret.



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Driving into 2019: HARLEY DAVIDSON Isn't Running Out of Gas

BY JOHN SCOTT LEWINSKI

As America's biggest motorcycle manufacturer turns 115 years old, it doesn't strain the art of metaphor too heavily to say the company is at a crossroads. Harley-Davidson makes a lot of money off of its past, but the future demands it must turn onto a strange, unpaved road.

While most of its overall income still flows from older, well-heeled riders who can afford H-D's comfort-centric bikes, developing demographics and cultural trends make it clear Harley must evolve or become roadkill. So, the company needs to please its aging, dwindling but well-funded crop of veteran customers with one hand while grooming new products and concepts to attract younger riders with the other.

Harley-Davidson's 115th anniversary celebration kicked off earlier this year in Prague for the European faithful, but the party came home to Harley's hometown of Milwaukee the last week of August. Early autumn weather greeted the Orange and Black as it offered the assembled motorcycle media a firsthand look at just how it plans to manage its temporal juggling act between the steady money of the past and economic demands of days inbound.

A party took over a city of more than 600,000 people with a mix of denim, leather and rattling engine noise. From the shores of Lake Michigan to the domain of dairy farms, special events and concerts brought riders from across the United States, and around the world, together to celebrate the metal and memories of their two-wheeled love affairs.

There's still plenty of horsepower in the Bar and Shield's cultural following. According to the tourism stats at VISIT Milwaukee, the four day #HD115 weekend brought more than 150,000 riders to the city, with an economic impact of more than \$95 million. However,

there was more than a touch of gray around most of the venues to go along with a bit of cosplay as many of the enthusiasts are looking a little long in the handlebars to pull of the badass biker vibe. While there were still a handful of dyed in the leather motorcycle gangs throwing back Black Jack here and there, the neutral observer expected to see a lot of the revving revelers in MKE return to their dentist offices, accountancy firms and assisted living apartments when they took off



the cowhide vests and chaps.

As though acknowledging that reality, the company showed off two new bike designs that point toward what its factories simply must build more of in the future. First, there's the 2019 FXDR 114—a stark design departure for H-D and a look ahead to models based more on speed, performance and fun. Christened a “power cruiser,” the FXDR employs the Milwaukee-Eight 114 engine with a sleek body design made of weight-cutting aluminum and new composite components.

Though it fits in the Softail family, FXDR 114 engineering emerged out of its company's Screamin' Eagle Drag Racing garage. And, its visual departure from Harley's older bikes reveals how a focus on performance and

modern aesthetics changed how this new machine presents itself. While the classic Harley-Davidson is big, wide and upright, the FXDR 114 is compact, sleek and lower to the ground. While the traditional Harley is made of black leather and chrome, the FXDR 114's new materials give it a more modern, techie aura.

One look reveals bigger air intakes and exhaust with size contrasts between the front and rear wheels. The rider sits lower with the legs angled more forward while looking

at entirely digital gauges and instrumentation. The feel of the bike is lighter, more nimble and responsive—a seismic leap away from the hulking, car-on-two-wheel look of Harley-Davidson's traditional high-end touring models. While long hauls would prove uncomfortable on a FXDR114, a rip around the city or a track would be infinitely more entertaining. That's who the new bike is aimed squarely at as it rolls off the line—younger, city-based riders looking for lighter, quicker transportation with some visual flair. That flair starts just a tick north of \$21,000—a hefty

price tag for any urban motorcycle. The future isn't getting cheaper out of Milwaukee, but the FXDR 114 will definitely catch the eye for that money.

An even bigger jump into the future was on display at Harley's event HQ, offering everyone in attendance a look at the Livewire, the company's first electric motorcycle and the initial model in an oncoming line of similar machines. Word of the Livewire hit in 2014 as Harley-Davidson built a set of 50 public prototypes. You maybe caught sight of one under Scarlett Johansson's leather clad hinder in Marvel's *The Avengers: Age of Ultron*. From there, H-D went about the country showing the Livewire to enthusiasts and inviting them to give the early builds a test run. Engineers and designers gathered up the collected data

COURTESY BY HARLEY-DAVIDSON



and varied opinions and ran it all back to Milwaukee to build the mix into the official motorcycle coming to dealerships in 2019.

A true sports bike that looks nothing like the “Sportsters” already tucked into Harley’s current line, the rider straddles, more than sits, on a Livewire. With an electric motor replacing a fossil fuel V-Twin, the clutch disappears. The rider is left with a typical twist-and-go throttle with very atypical speed.

This new age of electrified transportation brings with it immediate torque. Ye olde engines needed the piston system of “suck, squeeze, bang, blow” to build up enough power and get the wheels turning. There’s no such momentum party needed with the Livewire. All those electrons answer the call immediately and the wheels will get up to speed as fast as their attached rubber and the road surface allows. All that speed comes with only a faint

If you ride a Livewire long enough, getting back on a gasoline-powered bike might prove a letdown.

of H-D lovers, that thrill of raw, immediate and nimble speed might prove unwelcome. The traditional Harley biker likes to lean back, hang his or her arms off the gorilla bars and cruise in padded-butt comfort. That’s not the Livewire vibe. It’s all about leaning forward, hunkering down over what used to be the gas tank and flying.

So, the first electric Harley could be polarizing for the faithful. The old guard’s arthritis won’t let them grind into a Livewire’s body even if they accept it into their hearts.

The star of this show is the new BOOM! Box GTS infotainment system. Utilizing an easily read, full-color touch screen that works with gloves and in any weather, BOOM! Box plays stereo music for all the world to hear while offering an easy-to-use SatNav system for clear directions or for saving favorite ride routes. A wireless headset designed to cooperate with a full face helmet adds communication and voice command technology.

The CVO riding experience is classic touring Harley, offering physical ease on long



whine and the sound of wind caressing your helmet, so addicts to that patented H-D engine cacophony have to adjust the senses.

The riding experience is thrilling and addictive. Even a motorcycle veteran needs to get a handle on throttle control. A Livewire goes when you hit the power and slows to a stop when you take it away. Any gas bike would be the same, but not with the same immediacy. The electric machine’s “twist and go” feel makes braking less necessary when coming to a stop as a cut to the electricity lulls the motor. After a few miles, the joys of such a system become clear. If you ride a Livewire long enough, getting back on a gasoline-powered bike might prove a letdown. In the sometimes odd world

Regardless, come #HD120 in 2023, there will be an entire Livewire family of electric motorcycles sparking through the streets of Beer Town.

Even amidst the introductions of the revolutionary FXDR 114 and Livewire, the minds behind Harley-Davidson remembered they have to keep their traditional customers happy. For a make specializing in big, comfortable, equipped motorcycles, their CVO (Custom Vehicle Operations) group represent the biggest, the most comfortable and premium equipped models available.

For 2019, Harley-Davidson evolved their CVO selections to be more sophisticated, less noisy and much more technically advanced.

rides for a price tag that can climb well above \$40,000—depending on model, trim level and accessories. While the FXDR and Livewire put riders more in touch with the road at speed, the CVOs elevate the owner above the fray so he or she can walk away from the bike without aches and pains.

The overall motorcycle market will continue to change over the coming years, heavily influenced by socio-economic factors largely out of Harley-Davidson’s control. How the company continues to predict and adjust to that future with ever-evolving additions and refinements to its line will decide how big a celebration Milwaukee might see when its iron horses turn 125, 150 or 200 years old.





Emily

Photography by **SÉBASTIEN BRAILLON** @SBPHOTOGRAPHYBRAILLON
Model @WIOLETAKONSTANCJACZAJKA



Describe yourself in three words:

Painting, film, literature.

Were you excited to shoot for Playboy?

I'm always excited before every shoot like it's the first time. I absolutely love what I do, and it gives me enormous joy.

What was it like starting out as a model?

To be honest, I became a model by pure coincidence. I worked as a journalist, and one of my colleagues took a couple of photos of me. That's how it started...

What would you consider to be your biggest challenge as a model so far?

Photo shoot in the Eggishorn mountains at 2,927 meters above the sea level at 7AM. It was cold and wet. I had only high heels on my feet :)

Describe your perfect day off when you are not modelling?

All my days off I spend with the people I love the most and these days happen to be the most beautiful days of my life. What I value the most in my life are my friends and family.

Do you feel more like a city person or a country person?

I was born and grew up in a small town in the western part of Poland. I have also lived in the capital city for over 10 years now, and I find it much easier to be independent and keep privacy in a big town like Warsaw. It also gives you far greater opportunities to pursue a career of your choice, study and simply have fun. I don't really imagine myself living in the countryside anymore.

If you could live anywhere in the world, where would it be?

I am still looking for my "paradise on earth", a place where I could simply devote myself to painting, which I'm really passionate about.

Do you have a secret talent?

I like romantic poetry, I also write poems about love - either happy or sad. While doing so, I do not rely on my private experience - I'm always carried away by my imagination. I've also started to write a book - but all the details remain secret for now.

A guilty pleasure?

Chocolate!

Which song is absolutely certain to make you cry whenever you hear it?

"Imagine" John Lennon & Yoko Ono. I'm also very emotional about Ennio Morricone's work.

What is your favourite word in any language and what does it mean?

"Heart" is the most beautiful word in the whole world. You can read it the way you want :)













FIGHTING FOR FREEDOM OF SPEECH IN BANGLADESH'S CAPITAL

BY ANDRÉ NAFFIS-SAHÉLY





Everyone warned me to avoid Bangladesh. Regardless, there I was at departures, nervously awaiting my second flight, at New York's John F. Kennedy Airport. Eighteen hours later, I landed at Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka—the capital and largest city in the south asian country—eager to attend the 2017 edition of the city's Literary Festival. As I waited for the other invited writers to join us at arrivals, I glanced out at the the impenetrable tangle of buses, bicycles and auto rickshaws crawling along. "How many people would actually show up?" I thought to myself. It was a fair question given that over the past five years, several dozens of writers, journalists and activists had been harassed or jailed in the region, caught between an increasingly authoritarian state machine all too willing to oppress them and bands of religious terrorists out for their blood

While the Dhaka Literary Festival (DLF) had been up and running since 2011, the organizers are no strangers to sudden cancellations and in 2015, 19 participants had dropped out of the festival in response to the slaying of five Bangladeshi secularists that year (including Avijit Roy, a blogger who'd been murdered while visiting a book fair with his wife). The 2016 edition of the festival had unfolded under even worse circumstances: In April of that year, a law student had been hacked to death by Islamists at a traffic junction in Dhaka, and July had seen a group of gunmen open fire on a bakery in the upscale neighborhood of Gulshan, killing 29 people (including many foreigners, most of whom were from Italy and Japan).

Writer and DLF co-director Ahsan Akbar reminisces in a memoir published in *The Spectator* that, although a few participants had dropped out of the 2016 festival, the organizers' faith in keeping the show going had been rewarded by the presence of Nobel Prize-winning writer Sir Vidiadhar Surajprasad Naipaul TC (better known as V.S. Naipaul), who was wheeled onto the stage. As Akbar describes, Naipaul reminded his numerous colleagues and admirers that succumbing to fear is never an option in trying times, despite the temptation to do so. The security risks posed by the attacks had nonetheless forced the DLF organizers to take rather extreme precautions, as one of the other guests, Garga Chatterjee, later recalled when he described finding a pink



note waiting for him on his hotel pillowcase forbidding any exit from the festival's hotel grounds.

In light of the chaos, it is understandable that family and friends were opposed to my next travel destination — and that's with my usual controversial destinations in mind. As I'd often done in the past, however, I muted their concerns and maintained a solidly unruffled attitude —one at least partly motivated by the fact that I had grown up in highly censored Abu Dhabi, where the government never released accurate temperature readings during the summer to keep its guest-workers laboring in unsafe conditions. As a result, I had grown up assuming true freedom of speech didn't really exist anywhere — and that anyone willing to oppose that reality would be placing their lives at risk.

In contrast, the 2017 edition of the Dhaka Literary Festival appeared as though it might be held under slightly

prior to the festival's commencement. A relatively inauspicious beginning, one could argue, but one that made being there feel all the more necessary if only to bear witness to the travails of a country whose future had looked far more promising only a decade earlier.

After all, despite becoming a byword for catastrophe in Western media outlets since achieving independence in the Liberation War of 1971, the 2000s saw Bangladesh achieve growth rates three times higher than the average European country, with most indicators —education, agriculture and life expectancy —painting a far brighter future for the country than many had previously imagined. But while Bangladesh's economy boomed, the secularists of the Awami League and the religious nationalists of the BNP took turns being in power and exploiting the state's resources to plague and harass the out-of-power opposition. Pockets of violent created resentment on both sides over the past

government to prosecute journalists.

And while the liberty afforded to suppressed voices by the internet revolution created a number of online publications able to exercise a greater level of free speech — Avijit Roy's blog Mukto-Mona (or Freethinkers) being a perfect example. It also meant increased scrutiny for Bangladesh's secular voices, making it possible for the extremists to monitor their activities and even their movements, as happened to Roy himself, who was harassed on Facebook and threatened with murder before eventually being murdered in front of impotent police. As a result of bills like the Digital Security Act, the space for free speech in Bangladesh has been drastically reduced, with the 2018 World Press Freedom Index ranking Bangladesh 146 out of 180, just one place ahead of cartel-crippled Mexico. Further, the index reported that “media self-censorship is growing [in Bangladesh] as a result of the endemic violence against journalists and

A crucial element of this Bangladeshi merry-go-round of power and persecution has been the willingness of both parties to pass draconian legislation designed to silence any opposition to them.

less dramatic conditions than on previous occasions. Despite the relatively quiet political situation within the country, more than half a million Rohingya (members of Myanmar's persecuted Muslim minority) had been terrorized into fleeing across the border into Bangladesh by Myanmar's government forces within the festival's three days — an act that the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights later termed “ethnic cleansing”. While reporters beamed images of the swelling Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh to the rest of the world, the Dhaka Literary Festival kicked off into high gear when the Indian journalist Jyoti Malhotra alerted the audience to the disappearance of Mubashar Hasan. The Bangladeshi university professor who had researched radical Islamic extremism in the region had been abducted just a few days

two decades, leading to hundreds of cases of bombings, stabbings, murders, kidnapping and acts of wanton destruction perpetrated against both secularists and Islamists. Much of the violence reported overseas, however, has been inflicted chiefly on progressives and secularists, which seems unsurprising since as Reporters Without Borders have noted, while Bangladesh is “officially secular”, it is generally considered “a bad idea to criticize the constitution or Islam”. A crucial element of this Bangladeshi merry-go-round of power and persecution has been the willingness of both parties to pass draconian legislation designed to silence any opposition to them. In fact, on October 8, 2018, President Abdul Hamid signed into law the new Digital Security Act, which criminalizes the defamation of government officials, making it easier for the Bangladeshi

media outlets.”

In such a polarized environment, arriving at the unadulterated truth is almost impossible. Still, what appeared decidedly clear during my trip in 2017 was that while Bangladesh's recent tumultuous history— a loop of violent outbursts, ineffectual crackdowns, tense lulls and fierce re-eruptions—initiatives like the Dhaka Literary Festival have not only increased the number of venues available to freethinkers in Bangladesh, they have also provided the country's capital with one of its few opportunities to consider problems and solutions on an international scale.

Notwithstanding the dramatic buildup, my trip proved almost unimaginably uneventful. The security escorts felt unnecessary and this time, there was no pink note waiting on anyone's pillow. Although advised against it, I strolled the streets at







various times of day and night without any repercussions and found only friendliness or curiosity. During those five days, I read my poems about life in the United Arab Emirates in front of enthusiastic audiences — many of whom, I was later told, had family or friends who worked there — and then gave a couple of lectures in Chittagong in the south of the country, close to the border with Myanmar. I came to realize on both my flights that I was the only white person on the plane who wasn't a journalist heading to document the expulsion of the Rohingya, which the DLF's organizers, led by the novelist K. Anis Ahmed, protested via a heart-broken, eloquent statement, which I was more than happy to sign.

While I was unable to attend every reading or discussion I would have liked,

If left unchecked, it is not difficult to see Bangladesh—or anywhere, for that matter—slide further into this sort of chaos, which is why it would be wise to remember the words of writer Christopher Hitchens, who once remarked that “wherever the light of free debate and expression is extinguished, the darkness is very much deeper, more palpable, and more protracted. But the urge to shut out bad news or unwelcome opinions will always be a very strong one, which is why the battle to reaffirm freedom of speech needs to be refought in every generation.”

The light Hitchens described was amply in evidence in Dhaka, no doubt fostered by the warmth and earnestness of the DLF's co-directors, all of whom are accomplished artists in their own right. And in the end, it was clear that the generosity of our hosts

In such a polarized environment, arriving at the unadulterated truth is almost impossible.

as I paced around the leafy grounds of the Bangla Academy, where the festival is held each year, I was struck by the enthusiasm of the thousands of young attendees who seemed to leap from one event to the other. This image provided a stark contrast to many Western literary festivals, where big-draw names often end up reading their work to a handful of greying heads. This was an incredibly comforting sight.

Nowadays, far too many countries around the world find themselves precariously close to the turbulence Argentina experienced during its Dirty War (1976–1983), when thousands of 'desaparecidos' were vanished by a paranoid police state, or to the seemingly interminable assassinations of journalists in Mexico's ongoing Drug War (2006 –).

and audiences filtered through to many of us, as proven by the Sri Lankan novelist Anuk Arudpragasam, whose novel *The Story of a Brief Marriage* (Flatiron/Macmillan, 2016) was awarded the \$25,000 DSC Prize for South Asian Literature towards the festival's close, and who promptly donated a third of his winnings to NGOs assisting the Rohingya. Nevertheless, alongside other writers, on leaving Bangladesh I couldn't help but think that I was leaving behind embattled intellectuals whose futures perhaps looked more uncertain than ever. That being said, Dhaka's youth as I came across them during my brief stay appear well poised to fight that generational battle to reaffirm their freedom of speech—and I fancy their chances of winning.



HERITAGE

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"Bring in another."



"I was going through that naughty-or-nice routine for the millionth time when suddenly "Bring in another." it hit me—who am I to judge?"



"It's been such a perfect evening...the sleigh bells, the softly falling snow, the blow job."



"No screwups this year, Frankie. The ones on this list get a fruitcake. The ones on this list get whacked."



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